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# How *to* Prepare *an* Expository Sermon

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BY

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THE STANDARD PUBLISHING COMPANY
CINCINNATI, OHIO

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*To the students of my class in expository preaching, through whose help and co-operation many of the principles here given were worked out and tested, this book is affectionately dedicated.*

Sympathetically undertaken, the study of the Bible becomes an absorbing passion which will find its perfect satisfaction only when "we see no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face." The glory of expository preaching is that it awakens an enthusiasm for the Word, and stirs men to that personal exploration of the inspired message which will be worth more to them spiritually than all the sermons they will hear.

NICHOLS.

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# PREFACE

THREE facts have impressed themselves upon the author during the fifteen years that he has been teaching homiletics to young men preparing for the ministry.

The first of these is that writers on the subject of preaching are unanimous in regard to the value of expository preaching. All agree that it is the most effective form of pulpit eloquence.

The next thing that has been forced upon his attention is that while there is this unanimity of opinion, very few of our modern preachers are using this method. The reason for this condition would seem to be either a lack of knowledge of the value of expository sermons, or a lack of ability in preparing them.

In trying to account for this strange anomaly, the author became impressed with the further fact that there are practically no books published which place in the hands of preachers the means for developing efficiency along this line.

So unfortunate a lack in our religious literature is the cause of the present volume, and, while it may not accomplish all that the author would like, he hopes that it may at least prove suggestive to some and help to focus attention upon an important and neglected field in theological study.

H. E. Knott.

# CHAPTER I.

## THE VALUE OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

THE expository sermon is an effort to explain, illustrate and apply the Scriptures to life; or, to use F. B. Meyer's words, "expository preaching is the consecutive treatment of some book or extended portion of Scripture on which the preacher has concentrated head and heart, brain and brawn, over which he has thought and wept and prayed, until it has yielded up its inner secret, and the spirit of it has passed into his spirit."

Its purpose is to help the hearers to find in the sacred writings the true interpretation of life. This is both a high ideal and a most delightful task, kindling in the soul of the preacher that spark of heavenly fire which glows with enthusiasm and conviction.

Every great preacher, as well as every writer on the subject of homiletics, regards expository preaching as the method par excellence. Thus Phelps, in his "Theory of Preaching," says: "By parting with expository preaching, the pulpit has parted with its most important aid and stimulus to variety. No other one thing gives to preaching so wide a range of religious thought as the exposition of the Scriptures when it comes forth as the fruit of a rich, full mind—rich in scholarly resources, and full of intense, practical aims.''

Dean Brown, of Yale Divinity School, in the ''Art of Preaching,'' declares his preference for this method in the following terms: ''I am a firm believer in the value of expository preaching.'' Among other reasons for this attitude he affirms that ''it has the historic warrant of being apostolic.'' It ''ensures a more thorough knowledge of the Bible on the part of the preacher himself.'' ''This method of preaching,'' he says, ''also develops a more thorough knowledge of the Bible on the part of the people.'' ''The expository form of preaching gradually develops both in the pulpit and pew the Scriptural point of view, than which there is none better.''

Professor Smyth, of the University of Dublin, in ''The Preacher and His Sermon,'' says: ''Our teaching would be much more systematic if we had more expository preaching. It is a great need. People do not learn the Bible, they do not learn how full of interest a book of the Bible is when rightly understood.''

Other writers on the subject are just as clear and emphatic.

3. (a) The habit of preaching expository sermons is a splendid discipline for the preacher. It gives him a more profound and vital interest in the

study of the Bible. It encourages him to search there for sermon material rather than in the newspaper or in the works of science and philosophy. The notion that the Bible is not as interesting or as fruitful in sermonic material as these other fields, is a gigantic mistake. The only reason that people think the Bible is uninteresting is because they do not know it. F. B. Meyer has probably not overemphasized it when he says that the real knowledge of the Bible is less than that of the standard works of fiction or poetry.

The expository method also leads to a new method of studying the Scriptures. The purpose changes from that of seeking the bases of sermons in individual texts to that of finding the meaning of a book or chapter.

This new approach to the Bible also gives breadth to one's thinking, and both keeps the preacher a student, and at the same time keeps his thinking in harmony with divine truth. The one thing a preacher ought to know is his Bible, and this not only in the sense of an accumulation of texts, but also in the revelation of various statements to the context. The more one knows the Bible and endeavors to live it out in his own life the better man he will be and the larger will be his ultimate influence on his people and community.

The church is suffering to-day from the ministrations of two types of men in the pulpit—those who are too broad and those who are too narrow. The former are well informed *about* the Bible, but are not informed *in* it, or have lost their bearings and are trying to reach the popular mind by lecturettes on passing events, talking glibly about the relation of science to religion, the need of the modern mind and similar subjects. The other group is made up of those whose preaching is thoroughly orthodox and sincere, but who have poorly furnished minds, and who have only a vague knowledge of the Bible as a whole. The sermons of this group naturally lack depth of thought, and, beyond the speakers' sincere expressions of faith and hope, are ineffective because they fail to relate Biblical truth to personal experience. If the broad men were to base their messages on the contents of the Scriptures, and the latter type knew the Bible better, both would undoubtedly be more interesting, and more helpful to their hearers.

One of the dangers to which any preacher is liable to fall a prey is "harping on the same string." He may be influenced in his preaching by his temperamental background—most, if not all, men are, to some extent—and thus may preach along special lines of temperament, training or experience. If one is studiously inclined, he is likely to display in his pulpit work an interest in some particular field; if one is mystically inclined, he is likely to spend much of his time in the clouds; and if one is afflicted with some physical ailment or having financial difficulties, his messages are likely to be somber and gloomy. People love variety. The Lord did not make the flowers all of one kind, neither did He ordain that the fruit should be all the same in shape, size, color or taste. All the dangers of temperament, training and experience may in some measure be offset, however, when by the expository method we make the experience fit the truths of Scripture rather than use the Scripture to illustrate our own experience, as is likely to be the case in the topical method of preaching.

Not only, however, will the expository method control the preacher's religious outlook, but it also eliminates the waste of time and loss of nervous energy absorbed in solving the problem, "What shall I preach about next Sunday?" Brown gives it as his experience, after spending one or two hours daily in the intensive study of individual books of the Bible, that after the first four months of his ministry he never spent a quarter of an hour hunting for a text or a theme. Whether every expository preacher is as fortunate may be doubtful, but all will endorse his views regarding the wonderful homiletical value of studying with the expository method in mind. "No other study," the same writer declares, "is so prolific of the finest quality and variety of homiletic materials as the study of the

Scriptures. No other materials work into the realities of human life and the emergencies of men's souls so deftly as the materials thus gained. Once full of them, and with a mind assimilated to their quality, with a speech that holds them at the tongue's end, a preacher need never exhaust himself. He need never rack his brain, or roam the streets for something to say and something to the point. The stream is perennial. It is the river of the water of life.'' We are not surprised, either, to hear him testifying to the homiletical value of this method, or, what is still more vital, an uplifting of the mind ''into a Biblical atmosphere, especially an atmosphere of faith in God and in this world's future.''

To solve the problem of next Sunday's sermon, one must have a field for the cultivation of new themes, and beyond all question the most fertile, as well as the most desirable, is the Bible. The seed must germinate there, or we are failing in our purpose to apply the truth of divine revelation to the experience of man. Not only, however, do the Scriptures supply the seed thought, but they also aid in its development. The topical method, for example, requires one to develop his proposition from outside sources, while the expository seeks this end by intensive study of the text, and absorption of one's soul to the ideals and spirit of the Biblical writer. This latter method does not ignore experience, but brings the interpretation of it into harmony with the fundamentals of the word of God.

Another feature of expository preaching is that it makes it easy to introduce topics that are unwelcome. Some preachers find a difficulty in giving messages on finances, missions, Jesus' teaching on marriage, and similar themes. To give a topical sermon on any of these subjects may sometimes be embarrassing, but, if one is giving the exposition of a Scripture in which these subjects are an integral part, he can introduce them as a step in the development of his theme, and, so far as he is concerned, the objectionable part is either eliminated or greatly diminished.

b) The benefits of expository preaching, however, are not limited to the preacher. The congregation also gains by this method. It awakens an interest in the study of the Scriptures, if it can be shown that the Bible throws light upon the problems of life. Nothing is more needed in our day than an awakened interest in the Bible. It is the hope of our civilization. Science and literature have their value for the intellectual and æsthetic natures, but the moral and spiritual, which are the most important, have their stimulus through contact with divine truth. The sad thing about this age of education in which we live is that people do not know the most helpful and most interesting book in the world. For human interest and practical value, Shakespeare, Milton and Tennyson, Longfellow and Lowell are not even close competitors. What a feeling of satisfaction and delight comes to a person who, after a sermon, says: "I never heard it explained that way before." That experience is the starting-point for a renewed interest in the study of the Bible.

4. With this unanimity of opinion among teachers and writers on the subject of preaching, and the facts regarding its value, it would seem that every preacher ought to be delivering expository sermons most of the time. This, however, is not the case, for exposition is one of the rarest products of the pulpit. Why this strange paradox? Probably a number of causes have contributed to this anomaly.

(a) In the first place, poor exposition in part has led to the idea that such sermons are dry and uninteresting. Harry Emerson Fosdick decries that type of preaching that proceeds on the assumption that people attending church are deeply concerned with some historical exposition, ending with some practical application to the auditors. He is right in saying that people do not come to church desperately anxious to discover what happened to the Jebusites. He does not, however, suggest the elimination of expository preaching, but rather that the preacher "start with the auditor's vital need, and throw all the light he can on that." As will be shown later, the evil above mentioned can be overcome by the proper selection of a proposition through which the discussion is given a vital setting.

2 Another reason for antipathy to expository sermons is a misunderstanding as to what an expository sermon really is. Thus it is not "a running, skittering comment, suited to a Sunday-school class." Neither is it "a prayer-meeting style of comment, full of pious homily, and with a certain amount of exegesis of a loose type." Still further, it is not "an exhaustive and exhausting digest of all the commentaries to which one has access." On the other hand, there must be unity in the message, progress, organization of material, and a definite goal.

3 Among others there is a feeling that the demand for popular preaching, and the adapting of the message to present-day problems, makes expository preaching difficult. This, as we have already indicated, is a lamentable fallacy. What we believe and hope to show is that the Bible is as vital, as stirring and as thrilling when properly applied as ever it was. There is no realm of human thought or activity in which the Scriptures can not be applied. In business they introduce the Golden Rule, enjoin diligence, command that we "lie not," and admonish us to "defraud not." Again, we are told that we are to "dis-

Keep yar stinkin' writin utensiles off this here bk.

tribute to the necessity of the saints," "do good to all men," and "forgive if we would be forgiven." Are these practical and modern? No subject has been more prominent in recent years than law enforcement. Here, again, the Scripture speaks and says: "Obey them that rule over you." This injunction was given when the Government was persecuting those who were exhorted to obey it. For idealism, so badly needed in this materialistic age, we are advised to seek "first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and to pursue whatsoever things are pure, true, lovely and of good report. For every relation in life—in the home, the community and the nation, at school, at business or at play—the Bible sets forth principles to meet every need and to solve every problem.

(d) The last reason to note for the scarcity of expository sermons is the difficulty many have in preparing and delivering discourses of this type. Successful work in exposition requires a keen exegetical or analytical mind, with ability to get into the spirit of the writer and express with conviction and enthusiasm the applications of the text. This combination of head and heart, intellect and emotion is not a common one, but where they are combined in the same personality there is the possession of expository power. There is no more vitalizing force, no impulse more quickening to the soul, than the discovery in the Bible itself of the interpretation and meaning of life. To give utterance to these discoveries to an ever-waiting world is one of the richest experiences of the human soul. Any preacher would do well to seek its attainment.

Shortly before his death, Dr. F. B. Meyer, on the occasion of a visit to Liverpool, recalled an incident which marked a point of vital interest and importance in his development as a preacher. Referring to the days when he began his ministry in that city, he said: "I can never forget the spot where we stood together one Sunday evening after Mr. Birrell had heard me preach at Pembroke Chapel. 'That was a good sermon,' he said, 'but it was on a topic which journalists can handle better than we can. If you are going on that line, you will come to the end of your resources. Be advised by me, and be content with the golden stores of Scripture, and you will never be wanting either the subject of a sermon or the congregation.' That," said Dr. Meyer, "changed my life. I have been content to unfold the wealth of Scripture. All the books I have written and fifty-seven years of preaching find me only at the beginning of realizing the literary beauty, the historic interest, the profound moral and spiritual charm of the old Bible."

The judgment of such minds is not lightly to be set aside. It must be respected.

## QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES ON CHAPTER I.

1. Give a definition of an expository sermon, and show how it differs from any other type.

2. State what seems to you to be the most important reasons given by writers on homiletics for regarding the expository method of preaching as the best.

3. What are some of the most helpful results that come to the preacher through adopting the expository method?

4. How does this plan help to solve the problem, "What shall I preach about next Sunday?"?

5. To what extent should an effort be made in modern preaching to arouse an interest in the study of the Bible?

6. To what extent can we assume that people possess an interest in the Bible to-day?

7. What part does the proposition have in making an expository sermon interesting?

8. From your knowledge of great preachers of our own and the past generation would you justify the statement that "expository preaching has been the best received of any"?

9. How would you describe the mental and religious type of man likely to make the greatest success as an expository preacher?

# CHAPTER II.

## THE SERMON OUTLINE

IT is proposed in the following chapters to explain and illustrate the process of preparing an expository sermon by applying principles to the various steps that are used in all kinds of sermons. As different writers divide sermon outlines in different ways, it may be well first of all to decide on the fundamental parts of an outline.

a) In its briefest form it consists of an introduction, development and conclusion. This is too general, however. Phelps' plan, which divides a discourse into text, explanation, introduction, proposition, divisions, development and conclusion, is a more elaborate form, and is technically correct. It lacks, however, the simplicity necessary for practical use. Between these two extremes an arm of outline is adopted in this work which it is believed conforms more closely to the method generally in sermon construction. This consists of (1) theme, (2) Scripture, (3) introduction, (4) divisions, (5) development, and (6) conclusion. In this form the explanation, introduction and proposition of Phelps' plan are all comprehended under the term "introduction," while theme is added because in expository preaching it has a special consideration as it determines in large measure the unit of Scripture to be used as the basis for the sermon. To make clearer the form we propose to use illustrating these six parts, a specimen outline is here given from that prince of expositors, Dr. Maclaren.

### THE NEW FORM OF THE OLD LAW.

Matt. 5:17-26.

*Introduction.*—The passage falls naturally into two parts—17-20, 21-26. In the first part Jesus lays down general principles; in the latter part He exemplifies and illustrates these principles.

I. THE KING LAYING DOWN THE LAW OF HIS KINGDOM IN ITS RELATION TO THE OLDER LAW OF GOD (17-20).

1. Jesus' authoritative tone (v. 17). "Think not." "I came not to destroy, but to fulfil."
2. Jesus' testimony to the permanence of the law (v. 18). "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass."
3. On the permanent element of the law Jesus builds its imperative authority in His

kingdom (v. 19). "Whosoever shall do and teach them he shall be called great."

4. As Jesus fulfilled the law, so His subjects must fulfill its spiritual meaning (v. 20). "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees."

II. AN ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE IN THE CASE OF THE OLD COMMANDMENT AGAINST MURDER (21-26).

1. The deepening and expanding of the commandment (vs. 21, 22). "Ye have heard," but "I say unto you."
2. Example is intensified by putting obedience to it before acts of external worship (vs. 23, 24). "If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."
3. Further exhortation to swiftness in casting out anger from the heart (vs. 25, 26). "Agree with thine adversary quickly."

*Conclusion*—Jesus "deepens and fulfills one precept of the old law by extending the sweep of its prohibition from acts to thoughts, by setting obedience to it above sacrifice and worship, and by picturing in solemn tones of parabolic warning the consequences of having the disobeyed precept as our unreconciled adversary.''

The above outline illustrates the six parts of a sermon previously referred to, which are the most practical divisions for any kind of sermon, but which in this example are applied to an expository discourse. In explaining and illustrating the principles involved in expository preaching, these parts of the outline will be taken up separately, so that the method may be perfectly clear. This should make the procedure simple and specific, the principles easy to grasp, and the result, we hope, fruitful.

The form of the outline given is the same for 2. all kinds of sermons; the expository type differs, however, in two particulars from other kinds: in (a) the first place, it usually takes a larger portion 1, of Scripture for its foundation, and, in the sec- (b) ond place, the development of the discourse is always an exposition and application of the 2 Scripture selected. The difference is thus not one of form, but rather of use of the materials out of which the discourse is built up. In the topical sermon, for example, a text is used simply to introduce or suggest the subject. ''Without faith it is impossible to please God'' may be used when preaching on faith, the text having no further purpose than merely to bring before the people the theme to be discussed. Any one of several other texts could be used with equal appropriateness, such as, "Have faith in God," or "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Having selected the text of a topical sermon, the preacher usually proceeds to develop it from extra-Biblical materials except where it is on a doctrinal subject, and for all practical purposes his use of the Scriptures has ceased. With the expository sermon, however, it is different; he begins to work out the development of his sermon by explaining and applying the text or portion of Scripture he has selected. If the text thus selected be "Without faith it is impossible to please God," an expository sermon would need to be treated somewhat as follows: What faith is, what the nature of God is, and how it is impossible to please God without faith. The same approach would be necessary in regard to the other texts. The whole sermon would be an explanation, exposition and application of the text.

Having said this much with reference to the various parts of a sermon, I want now to cast it into a different form to make clearer the significant elements of an expository sermon and their value. The form might thus be changed to the following outline: (1) Getting the idea from the Scripture. (2) Securing a contact of the theme with the needs or interests of the people. (3) Giving the exposition of the passage involved. (4) Making the application.

This is really only stating in a different way the points already discussed. Getting the idea involves selecting the theme and deciding upon the proposition. Securing a contact with the people's interest is only indicating part of the function of the introduction, while giving the exposition and making the application are simply factors involved in the development of the theme and the conclusion.

3. They are here restated in this form, however, to show where special care is required in an expository sermon. The danger is most likely to be found in the second part—securing the contact, and in the fourth—making the application.

(a) In deciding upon a theme for an expository sermon, one needs to be very careful that the topic or the proposition is one that has a vital relation to the interests of the people. Otherwise it may be a splendid sermon from the standpoint of the exegetical skill or the Biblical knowledge involved in the development, but if there is no interest in the discussion on the part of the audience, it is quite obvious that the sermon is a failure.

(b) On the other hand, one may stimulate an interest in the theme and its discussion, and again as a piece of Biblical exposition it may be a splendid effort, but if there is no application of the thought to the life of the people, again it has failed. For an expository sermon to be a success the theme selected must be close to the lives of the people, the Scripture explained must show broad and intensive study, and the application must be such that the hearers not only understand the theoretical meanings, but also their practical bearings on modern life. If these principles are applied, no message can fail to receive a good hearing, and the preparation and delivery of sermons will become an increasing joy.

This method of pulpit discourse is indeed a delightful procedure to a spiritually minded man with a trained mind. It keeps him busy delving into the Scriptures, and makes him a specialist in the realm where he ought to be supreme—the understanding of the word of God. In spite of all that some people may think to the contrary, the Bible is still an interesting book, and the one who can interpret its meaning in terms of modern experience will never be without an audience, and he has the additional satisfaction that he is giving to the people more knowledge about that Book which will be "a lamp" unto their feet and "a light" unto their path, and which is able to make them "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The old Book is rich in eternal values.

## QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES ON CHAPTER II.

1. What seems to you to be the best model of a sermon outline? Justify your answer.

2. How would you describe the difference between expository outlines and those of other types of sermons?

3. Would you regard it as any more difficult to prepare the outline of an expository sermon than that of a topical?

4. Explain why special care is necessary in determining the proposition of an expository sermon.

5. Can an application that is vital be made to all Biblical themes?

6. Would you consider it advisable to preach on a theme where the application is difficult?

7. Is it necessary for the outline of an expository sermon to be as apparent to the hearers as for other types of sermons?

# CHAPTER III.

## THE SCRIPTURE

IT has been pointed out that in expository preaching the Scriptures are used in a different way from that of any other type of sermon, in that it both suggests the theme and also forms the material out of which it is developed. Because of the function of the text or Scripture in a topical sermon in merely suggesting the subject, one verse of Scripture is usually enough, and often the purpose can be accomplished with less. With the expository sermon it is different. Since the material that is used in the development of the discourse must be based upon the passage selected, it is sometimes necessary and generally desirable to use more than one verse. The outline of Dr. Maclaren's given in the preceding chapter will help to illustrate this point. As Dean Brown says, the expositor "deals with the Scriptures in larger chunks than does the textual preacher."

But it may be asked, Does the expository method always require several verses of Scripture for the building of a sermon? No. It admits of an elasticity not found in any other type of sermon. Thus the passage selected may be only one or two verses, or may include several, even a chapter, or possibly a whole book. The only thing that determines the scope is, that the sermon must be a unit of thought and an orderly and complete working out of some proposition which gives the point on which the development is concentrated.

2. The Book of Philemon might be used to illustrate a sermon based on a whole book. It sets forth Paul's method of dealing with slavery, and is capable of a very practical application. Philemon, apparently a wealthy man, living in Colossæ, had a slave named Onesimus. This slave ran away from his master and fled to Rome. While in Rome he was led to Christ by the apostle Paul, and attached himself as a servant to the one who had thus brought him from darkness to light. Onesimus then revealed to Paul his past, and confessed that he had run away from Philemon. Paul is thus faced with the dilemma of deciding between loyalty to his friend Philemon and the principle of slavery. About that time Tychicus was leaving for Colossæ, and so Paul advised Onesimus to return with him and surrender his liberty, and he gave him a letter of introduction to his old master, which is our Book of Philemon. In this letter he requests Philemon to receive him "no longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother

beloved;'' to receive him as he would receive Paul himself. He further declares that if there is a financial consideration involved in setting his slave free, to ''put that to mine account . . . I will repay it.'' Now, slavery is a thing of the past, but here is the point. Paul asked one man to surrender his personal freedom when faith demanded it, and return to his slavery, and of another he asked the surrender of his social privileges and to receive him—a slave—as a brother, because of his faith. He was making a demand of each of these men on the basis of his faith in Christ that went to the limit. He set before them the ideal of a brotherhood that overruled all social and financial considerations, and in the principles Paul here lays down we have the only true remedy for all the industrial and social ills of modern society. This would be an expository sermon involving the whole book on the subject of ''Changing the Social Order.''

Again, although it would be more difficult because of the larger amount of material, the whole of the Gospel of John might be used for exposition with chapter 20:31 as a basis. The evidences presented in the book would then be set forth to show what the author believed would convince any open mind of the deity of Christ. Such passages as 5:36, ''The works that the Father hath given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me,'' would be a starting-point for the development of this type of sermon. Again, in chapter 5: 39, ''Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they that bear witness of me,'' would be another passage that would help to support the proposition given in chapter 20:31.

The plan suggested in these two examples could be extended so as to apply to a series of sermons on the individual books of the Bible, or it could be used as a helpful introduction to a series of sermons based upon any particular book.

3. Next to the study of a whole book as the basis for a sermon would be any unit of thought within the limits of a book that would supply material for the development of a proposition. Sometimes chapters are natural divisions, as is the case with several of the chapters of the Book of Hebrews, although oftentimes chapters do not make logical divisions. This logical division may be parts of two or more chapters; sometimes several expository sermons may be found within the limits of one chapter. Many of the Psalms, being like hymns, the expression of but one emotion, make themes for exposition. The writer once heard Dr. Chapman thus explain the twenty-third Psalm. He used it to empha-

size the author's idea of possession. Thus: "The Lord is *my* shepherd," "He maketh *me* to lie down in green pastures," "He restoreth *my* soul," and so on. The plan thus followed was to use the whole Psalm as a foundation, but to develop only one line of thought running through it.

Dr. Henry Drummond's famous little booklet entitled "The Greatest Thing in the World" is a further illustration of a sermon based on one chapter. He takes 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, and gives an exposition of it verse by verse. The method of organization by which he develops his theme will be discussed in a later chapter.

4. Sometimes, however, the expository sermon may be limited to a few verses or even a single verse. When used in this latter way, an expository sermon is likely to be the explanation of words with significant meanings; as, for example, the righteousness of faith, in which the apostle's technical use of this expression would be explained and then applied; or it might be the stressing of important words, and then showing their relation, as in Rom. 1:16: "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Here we have "gospel" (*euaggelion*), meaning "glad tidings" or "good news," then "power" (*dunamis*), meaning the dynamite of God, or "unto salvation," which

opens up a still larger field. Here it could be shown how the message of God's love in Christ is the dynamite that can accomplish in the realm of the spirit what gunpowder can in the physical. Or, again, a passage might contain a statement requiring explanation, or it might be one about which a series of questions could be asked; as, for example, the passage quoted in an earlier illustration, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." The questions, "What is faith?" "What is the nature of the divine character?" and "How is it impossible to please Him without faith?" all require an explanation or exposition and application of the text.

From this discussion it will be seen that the expository method, by being applicable to a book, a chapter, a few verses, or only a single verse, gives considerable variety to homiletic procedure.

It is a mistake, however, to imagine that the expository method requires discussing every subject involved in a book or a chapter, even when the studies are given consecutively. As Dr. F. B. Meyer says: "The preacher may be absolutely true to a passage, and his exposition may be positively Scriptural, when many of the details are left untouched." On the other hand, a preacher is only required to appropriate such Scripture as is pertinent to his purpose. "He must select the material which is suited to his subject and reject the rest. Let him not suppose that in so doing he does any violence to the word of God. If he were producing a commentary, he would be bound to neglect nothing contained in the passage. But he is not doing this. He is preparing a sermon upon a given subject which he finds in the passage considered, and, in order to a clear and emphatic presentation of the subject, he chooses that which is related to it.''

F. B. Meyer calls attention also to another matter in connection with expository preaching. He says: ''Some preachers seem to imagine that in a course of expository sermons it is necessary for them to treat every chapter successively, and sometimes to prepare several sermons on the same chapter.'' Then he adds the warning: ''Unless he is very highly gifted, and a man of unusual spiritual power, this will become intolerably wearisome.''

Exposition thus only means using the Scriptures in such a way as to select materials that have practical and vital interest, and can be applied with force and power. Furthermore, it only means choosing as much Scripture for each discourse as is necessary for the development of the theme.

The method thus makes possible either the intensive or extensive use of the Scripture. This enables the preacher to treat the less important themes as parts of a larger unit. It enables him also to enlarge upon vital topics, and keep all Scriptural subjects in purview, and relate them. It will thus be seen that the expository plan saves both preacher and people from disjointed, one-sided and unrelated ideas of Biblical thought. It keeps the preacher in the field where his chief interest should be, and gives the congregation that which they desire more than anything else from the pulpit—an explanation, interpretation and application of the Scriptures to daily life.

5. A good illustration of the way in which able expositors use the Biblical text may be seen by comparing the expositions of G. Campbell Morgan on "The Gospel According to Mark" with "Expositions of Holy Scripture," by Dr. Maclaren, covering the same part of the New Testament. The former completes the Gospel in thirty expositions, in which he condenses or enlarges according to his purpose and the proposition in each discourse. The latter has eighty sermons on the same book. If we take the first four of these from each writer, we have the following result in regard to the Scripture involved.

G. CAMPBELL MORGAN.

1. "The Beginning of the Gospel." Mark 1:1-3.
30 2. "Jesus Came." Mark 1:4-13.

3. "Jesus Came into Galilee." Mark 1:14-35.
4. "To This End Came I Forth." Mark 1:35—2:12.

## DR. MACLAREN.

1. "What 'the Gospel' Is." Mark 1:1.
2. "The Strong Forerunner and the Stronger Son." Mark 1:1-11.
3. "Mighty in Word and Deed." Mark 1:21-34.
4. "Healing and Service." Mark 1:30, 31.

It is interesting also to note here the different principle used in the statement of the themes. G. Campbell Morgan gives a brief phrase from the selection under consideration, which suggests the line of emphasis for his message. Dr. Maclaren states his in such a way as to arouse curiosity regarding his subject-matter.

### Exercises and Questions on Chapter III.

1. How might one proceed to build a series of sermons upon individual books of the Bible?

2. What value is there in sermons of this type?

3. Would a discussion about a book of the Bible be an exposition? Give reasons for your answer.

4. Would you regard a chapter usually as too much material for an expository sermon?

5. How might a whole chapter be treated in order to construct an original sermon from it?

6. What methods could be employed in order to make one or two verses the basis for an expository sermon?

7. In what respect are the principles of using Scripture alike in the examples given from Morgan and Maclaren?

# CHAPTER IV.

## THE THEME

THOSE preachers who adopt the expository method of preaching usually carry on an extensive study of some individual book of the Bible. The successive portions of the book thus become the material of their sermons. When one is preaching expository sermons regularly it is probably best to follow this plan for one service only on the Lord's Day, leaving the other free for the introduction of special themes. This plan of making an intensive study of individual books of the Bible is to be highly commended. It has never been tried so far as the writer's experience extends, except with very great advantages. Those who have pursued it consistently marvel at the wealth of material that is suggested for sermons, and testify unanimously to the number of themes that present themselves. For the pastor no plan has greater advantages than this one of having some book of the Bible receiving special consideration, and basing at least one sermon each Sunday upon his study. It leads to more united thinking between him and his people.

While it is very desirable, however, expository preaching does not require one to be giving special attention to some particular book of the Bible, neither is it necessary if one is giving a series of sermons on some book to preach upon every subject included in the study. One may be dealing with Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, for example, which includes quite a variety of topics, but he need feel no obligation to discuss every one of these topics. Generally speaking, of course, one will do this, and, to be sure, he will find his material easier to develop if his message can be related to a background which gives it a setting. The expository method, however, while making it desirable to proceed in this manner, does not make it a *sine qua non,* but has reference rather to the development of the individual sermon regardless of its relation to any series of which it may or may not be a part. It simply has reference to the working out of some portion of Scripture that is a unit of thought, the plan of development being on the basis of the Scripture selected.

Now, the appeal of the theme itself is determined by one of several factors. It may be the temperament of the preacher, the needs of the congregation as he understands them, his experience, or his understanding of the Scriptures. It is perfectly obvious that, since no two men are exactly alike, and the circumstances of no two congregations are just the same, no two men reviewing a portion of Scripture would use the same theme unless it had the elements common to all experience. Furthermore, if they did select the same Scripture, or theme, the development of each would be different. While all this would be true, however, the process could be the same. In the following paragraphs, therefore, in which it is proposed to illustrate the method of discovering themes, it will be understood that it is the *process* that is the important part, and not the reader's agreement as to whether or not the parts selected for themes are the most important and interesting in the Scriptures considered or not.

2. Before proceeding to illustrate the discovery of themes, I would like to make an observation or two with reference to the reading desirable before beginning the study of any book of the Bible. Suppose, for example, that we take up the study of the Gospel of John. There are many critical questions that might be reviewed. A study of *logos* might be an interesting exercise both in Greek and in philosophy, and it might interest one to read such discussions as may be found on the subject in Fisher's "Grounds for Theistic and Christian Belief," or the introduction to the book itself in any critical commentary. One's enthusiasm, how-

ever, in expository preaching, is to be found in the study of the Scriptures themselves, not in essays or books about the Scriptures; just as enthusiasm for Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, or any other poet, would be found in reading their works rather than critical dissertations about them.

In giving attention to any book, the first thing to do is to study it with reference to its main purpose. I mean, in the first place, what the author himself says; thus in John 20:31 we are told: "These are written that ye might believe, and, believing, have life through his name." I also mean that we ought to know of John's close association with Jesus as one of the inner circle—one of those who understood Him best. Then, as a further means of appreciating what He says, we ought to know that when Jesus expired upon the cross He committed to the care of John the keeping of His mother. To have the mother of Jesus living in his home in after years, to be in constant conversation with her upon spiritual things, placed him in a position where he could interpret the life of Jesus better, perhaps, than any of the Gospel writers. At any rate, he is credited by scholars with doing this very thing. These are some of the things that I mean when I refer to the general background which it is desirable to know before beginning the special study of any book.

It is such, you will observe, as the Scriptures themselves reveal, and would naturally deepen one's interest in the narrative, rather than leave him in a coldly critical attitude, such as is the natural result of the study *about* the book only.

Now, let us read a few chapters of John's Gospel and note some of the themes presented, and then in the later chapters of the book perhaps we can proceed to use these for further illustration. Commencing with chapter 1, I cover sixteen verses before finding the first suggestion for a sermon. I am then impressed with the words in verse 16, "Of his fulness we all received." What this fullness is gives the opportunity of reviewing the earlier part of the chapter and thus making it an expository sermon. The theme might then be "The Power of Christ in Us." In reading the next chapter my attention seems to be focused on verses 23 and 24, where I am led to ask, "Is seeing believing?" Passing to chapter 3, the mind unfailingly pauses at verses 14-16, which has its explanation in the narrative of Num. 21: 4-9, on the theme of "The Love of God." Further in the same chapter the verses from 32-36 take my attention, as I read of "witnessing to the truth." In the next chapter we have Jesus revealing Himself to the woman in "A Sermon by the Well." The fifth chapter, from verses 30-47, gives "Four Reasons for Believing in Jesus." Chapter 6 begins with the narrative of the feeding of the multitude, or "The Loaves and Fishes." In the latter part of this same chapter we have the memorable conversation of Jesus with His disciples in the face of a general defection, in which Jesus asks, "Will ye also go away?" the answer to which suggests the subject of never-failing interest, "The Final Authority in Religion." In the next chapter various criticisms are made and conclusions given concerning the personality and character of Jesus. They are the same conclusions that the world has always given concerning Him. These suggest the theme: "What the World Has Always Said About Jesus." In chapter 8, verses 12-30, the counterpart of the preceding sermon is given, for Jesus is defending Himself against the critical Pharisees, and is asserting His claims. So the theme here is: "Some Things Jesus Said About Himself." The whole of chapter 9 is taken up with the discussion about giving sight to the blind man. "A Cure for Blindness" is suggested by this narrative in its application to His critics. To put these topics and Scriptures in formal order, we would thus have the following list of themes, with which the Scriptures also are given:

"Christ's Power in the Christian" (1:18).
"Is Seeing Believing?" (2:23, 24).

"The Love of God" (3:14-16).
"Witnessing to the Truth" (3:32-36).
"A Sermon by the Wellside" (4:7-26).
"Four Reasons for Believing in Jesus" (5:30-47).
"The Loaves and Fishes" (6:1-14).
"The Final Authority in Religion" (6:66-69).
"What the World Said About Jesus" (7:1-36).
"What Jesus Said About Himself" (8:12-30).
"A Cure for Blindness" (9:1-41).

We might continue the process through the whole book, but the above examples are doubtless sufficient to illustrate the plan. As will be shown later, each of the above themes is intended to include in the development considerable portions of Scripture.

It might be interesting here to again compare the above with those two outstanding expositors, Maclaren and Campbell Morgan. The method of the former is the same as that suggested above. In Maclaren's expositions there is no essential connection between one sermon and the next, except where a series is definitely intended as in Matthew's Gospel, where a more or less connected series is given on the Sermon on the Mount, or where a group of sermons based on the Lord's Prayer is given, in which case each petition is made the basis for a sermon, and a logical relation is essential to the comprehending of each part. However, Maclaren not only takes these "larger chunks" for his discourses, but he also uses individual texts, and builds sermons upon them. So that he uses the dual method, and sometimes builds a sermon upon a combination of two or three separated passages, when it serves his purpose of completing the central thought of his message. Not all of Maclaren's sermons are of the expository type, however.

Campbell Morgan's method reveals a somewhat different approach to the Scripture. In his expositions of the Gospel of Mark referred to in an earlier chapter, large portions of Scripture are consistently used as the basis, and no part of the text is passed over entirely, but he does not try to develop every part with the same intensity. His plan is to use one or two verses which seem to be the key to the narrative, or represent the most vital thought of the section. He makes an effort, however, not only to build a sermon round the text, but also to show the relation of each discourse to the one preceding, and relate it to the book. These illustrations taken from two outstanding expositors represent the two methods involved, but an expositor will soon learn to make his own adjustments on this point when once he becomes familiar with the method as it applies to the individual sermon. It is well to get the expository habit.

To summarize the process: one reads his Bible to get the point, purpose and significance of its statements. The Revised Version is more helpful than the Authorized for attaining this end, because the topics are placed in paragraphs, and one can study each paragraph for his theme, or maybe relate two or more of them for a comprehensive discussion of a subject.

The discovery of the best in the Scriptures will ultimately, of course, be in the man. What we see in the text depends upon what we are. A sincere, consecrated, educated man will be likely to see what is overlooked or unseen by one not possessing these qualities. Two men were members of a party of tourists in Europe. They had just been visiting the ruins of an old castle. One remarked on the way home that it had been a tiresome day, for he saw nothing but a heap of stones. A stone quarry would probably have been just about as attractive to him. The one so addressed later told an audience that it had been to him one of the most interesting days in all his life. They both saw the same things with their eyes, but, while it stirred the soul and imagination of one, it made no impression on the life of the other.

In the same way a spiritual personality reading the Scriptures will find in the words of Jesus "spirit and life," for his faith in their inspired origin will thrill him as he reviews the promises, and yearns for the unsaved as he reads the warnings.

(c) He will be further aided in his selection of themes if he keeps in touch with the needs and heart-throbs of humanity. A sympathetic nature, living in vital contact with the world, and yet living near to God, will readily recognize in the Scriptures those truths that have significance for the life of the people he endeavors to help, as he seeks to unfold to them the truths of divine revelation.

### EXERCISES AND QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER IV.

1. What psychological advantages are there in concentrating upon one Bible book at a time?

2. How may continuous and intensive study of one book of the Bible develop one's interest in exposition?

3. How does the discovery of an author's purpose give the key to the interpretation of his writings?

4. What will limit one's ability to find themes in his Biblical study?

5. Why will different individuals find different subjects in the same Scripture?

6. What part does faith or conviction have in expository preaching?

7. How far should the methods in preparing expository sermons be the same in men whose interests are different?

# CHAPTER V.

## THE INTRODUCTION

1 IN the form of the outline used as a model, the explanation, introduction and proposition, as given by Phelps, are all comprehended in the term "introduction." The justification, if any is necessary, for this use of the word is the fact that all three of these steps are introductory to the discussion of the theme, and are regarded as introductory material in practical work.

The introduction as thus understood is not fundamentally different from that of any other kind of sermon, except perhaps this: that in a topical sermon, for example, the subject is fundamental, and is generally mentioned first, and then the Scripture simply referred to as giving a kind of justification for, or relation of, the theme to Scripture. In an expository sermon, the Scripture is generally the basis, and is given first, followed by its setting or meaning, and then comes its relation to the viewpoint to be treated in the discourse or the proposition.

2. Suppose we consider in the preparation of an expository sermon the three steps of progress

involved in the term "introduction" as we have decided to use it. These are explanation, introduction and proposition. In the explanation for (a) an expository message, the Scripture would involve more than the explanation of a single verse. It would now include the relation of the Scripture that is used to its context. This may mean one or two verses to a paragraph, a paragraph to a chapter, or a chapter or other logical division to a whole book. This wider scope of explanation, it will readily be seen, would give the congregation a broader view of the content of the Scriptures, and would help to create a greater interest in Biblical knowledge.

Having thus explained the background of the (b) passage to be treated, the next step is to arouse an interest in the topic to be discussed. The natural way to do this is by showing the relation which the Scripture bears to modern life, illustrating, if possible, by current events the interest it has for to-day. At this point is the opportunity and the danger of expository preaching. Merely to explain the Bible will not make it interesting; folk do not come to church "desperately anxious to discover what happened to the Jebusites." The Scriptures must be set forth in their important bearings and relationships. If one succeeds in showing that the theme is a vital one, or that the principle involved can be applied in modern times, an interest in the development is at once assured, but, if not, the congregation will at once assume the attitude, "I am not interested in that subject."

Now, having given the connection of Scripture to its context, and indicated the relation of the topic to modern life, the completion of this part of the outline is the proposition—or the particular phase of the topic which it is intended to develop in the sermon. Three suggestions may be given as an aid in determining this. The first is to find such a point to the topic as will be *interesting* to the congregation. ① This is absolutely necessary. How will one know what is interesting? By knowing his people. The more faithful one is in his ministry of visitation, sharing with his people their joys and sorrows, their hopes and fears, the more he will know their interests and be able to find the particular phase of each topic that will be attractive to them. The next thing to keep in mind in the determination of a proposition is to find one that is *helpful*. ② It may be interesting to know how many miles it is from Jerusalem to Jericho, how far it is across the Sea of Galilee, or it may even be interesting to be informed about the different explanations other than the Scriptural one concerning the resurrection of Jesus. The important thing is, however, how far will the proof of the proposition succeed in helping the people to realize in their lives those spiritual ideals that are the essence of our faith. Again, in seeking a proposition one can often find a *text or Scripture statement* which will serve this purpose. This has double value. It not only gives the point to the discussion, but links it up with the sacred writings, and so gives it added authority. This is exemplified in Campbell Morgan's expositions on Mark, which have been referred to already. He uses some brief quotation from the section of Scripture to be discussed as a key to his message. I quote here the headings to a few of his last expositions on Mark to illustrate this point:

"He found nothing but leaves" (11:1-25; see v. 13).
"This poor widow cast in more" (11:27—12:44; see 12:43).
"Watch" (13; see 13:37).
"A large upper room furnished" (14:1-26; see 14:15).
"I will go before you into Galilee" (14:27-52; see 14:28).
"And they led Jesus away" (14:53-72; see 14:53).
"Himself he cannot save" (15:1-32; see 15:31).
"A stone against the door" (15:33-47; see 15:46).
"The stone is rolled back" (16; see 16:4).

These quotations from the text, which may be regarded more as titles of the messages perhaps than propositions, are used as the key to the discussion in the sections to which they refer. In other words, the material is directly related to the quotation, and so in reality these extracts are the propositions. Many Biblical texts are splendid propositions, but where a passage is long, involved or difficult to comprehend for any reason at all, it is desirable to restate it in words that can be readily grasped.

A proposition, after all, is only a noun about which some affirmation is made or denied. Any statement is an assertion, and when an assertion is given as one's own belief, it becomes a judgment, and when that judgment is used as a proposition and developed in a sermon, the discourse should logically end when the proposition is proved, or has been illustrated and presented to the hearers so that the impression has reached its climax.

3. Let us begin now and apply our principles to some of the themes suggested in the preceding chapter. Our first theme was from John 1:1-18, "Christ's Power in the Life of the Christian." The verse to which my mind was mostly directly drawn was verse 16, which refers to the fullness of Christ, which we, as Christians, have received. So now, in linking up this first discourse with the purpose of the book, we find that one of the

first reasons for belief in Jesus on the part of His disciples is the consciousness of something received. This first part of the "introduction" is simply to relate the theme to the book as a whole. It could here be shown that it was a most natural thing for John to use this starting-point, since his own faith had its basis in a definite experience.

It may be observed here, however, that it is not always necessary to use an explanation. Indeed, sometimes it can not be done without making a connection or association which was never intended by the author. Not only is the explanation of a text unnecessary sometimes in an ordinary topical sermon, but the text may at other times be the proposition, so that either one or the other or both of these elements may be absent. This condition may also be true of an expository sermon. Where several verses of Scripture are involved a proposition is necessary, although even then it may be found in one verse, as one might find a topic sentence in any well-written paragraph in English.

But, having completed the first step which corresponds to the explanation, we pass to the second—the introduction proper. If the subject has not preceded the reference to the Scripture as suggested above, it is at this point that the preacher must use all his powers to interest his hearers in a discussion of the theme. In the sense in which the introduction is used when applied to the second of these three steps, the purpose is to attract attention, to develop interest and to create an atmosphere for the discussion. How, then, shall we proceed to introduce our theme on John 1:16? We might say to the audience, Did you ever stop to think that in the acceptance of Christ something of His personality becomes a part of us? Here the attention is arrested. But it might be further asked, What is the fulness referred to in the text? Here interest is developed. Then we might say, and here is the proposition—the third step, which will carry with it something of the atmosphere; I propose to show to you from this first chapter what this fulness is, in what sense we receive it, and in what measure it flows into our lives.

As thus briefly reviewed, the process in this part of the outline comprehended under the term "introduction" involved the setting of the Scripture, arousing an interest in the discussion of the theme, and the presentation of the proposition or definite point it is the speaker's purpose to demonstrate.

Now we will take the next theme, which is found in the second chapter. The topic seems to focus upon the thought of the relation of miracles or signs to faith. The title given to the theme is, "Is Seeing Believing?" with special attention to verses 23 and 24.

My own disposition here would be to awaken an interest in the theme before making any reference to the Scripture. One could start by saying, "We often hear it said that 'seeing is believing;' is it true? Or are some so blind that they can't see, and others so biased that they won't see?" Then proceed by saying: "Here is an interesting circumstance in which signs led some to believe, others who saw the same signs did not believe, and Jesus would not trust even those who professed belief. Why is this?" This question brings the speaker to the theme, "Is Seeing Believing?" Here the proposition would not be stated, for the curiosity aroused would be one of the chief reasons for interest in the theme. Though one may not always state his proposition, however, as in this case, the point or answer to the question should, nevertheless, be clear in his own mind. He should conclude his message with all doubt removed also from the minds of his hearers. If one has no answer to the problem, he should not raise it, for he will usually only be putting a difficulty in the minds of those who probably may not have had one on that particular point. Positive preaching is what is needed. People in the pews do not want their list of doubts augmented; what they do desire is that the preacher will, as he has opportunity, reduce this number by interpreting life for them in such a way as to make clear the pathway of faith. The pulpit has reveled altogether too much in the destruction of belief, thinking that it was an expression of intellectual integrity to parade doubt. Most people have enough doubts of their own, and in this baffling and complex world need assistance in finding the main highway, and the man who only takes them out into the woods is likely to find himself with empty pews.

If, therefore, the theme is put into this interrogatory form as it might be, the proposition may be concealed and the answer only given when the sermon has reached its conclusion.

Passing to the next chapter, we noticed in John 3:14-16 the theme, "The Love of God;" or, "The Uplifted Christ." In the setting of this Scripture Jesus had been talking to Nicodemus about the new birth. Nicodemus was not able to comprehend it. Jesus then said: "If I told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?" Then, as if to illustrate a truth so that it might be understood and comprehended for all time, He says: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life."

An obscure event in Israel's history is thus introduced to illustrate in prophetic way the love of God. What, now, are the points to this analogy? Here would be the basis for interest in the discussion. What significance did Jesus intend the illustration to have? and what significance does it have for us?

In the third chapter, from verses 11 to the end, the theme is: "Witnessing to the Truth." In showing the setting here, attention might be called to the fact that Jesus and John repeat the same thought. Thus in verse 11 Jesus is reported as saying: "We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and ye receive not our witness." In verse 32 the same sentiment is expressed by John, who says: "What he hath seen and heard, of that he beareth witness; and no man receiveth his witness."

The interest in the discussion would here be aroused by suggesting that there are certain criteria by which any testimony may be judged. Let us see what these are, and whether or not the people of Jesus' time were logical and reasonable in rejecting His message. Here the interest in the sermon would be brought about by raising this question.

So one might continue with the other themes that have been suggested for the succeeding chapters. The method is the same for all kinds of sermons; the expository, however, requires more thought in making the introduction interesting. In the ordinary topical sermon the theme is selected for its supposed interest, while in the expository, especially where Scripture topics are taken in consecutive order, it may be necessary to make a greater effort to arouse an interest in the theme.

However, this is always true, that all people are interested more or less in the fundamentals of religion. We all have a spiritual nature, and when we speak of gaining an interest for our theme, it simply means to relate it to those great issues of human life and destiny which touch the heart and arouse this nature to activity.

## EXERCISES AND QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER V.

1. Why is the introduction to any sermon very important?
2. Why is it specially important in an expository sermon?
3. What justification is there for including the proposition under the term "introduction"?
4. Can the introduction be written after the outline is completed as well as before?
5. Why would the approach to the introduction be likely to be more difficult in an expository sermon than a topical?

# CHAPTER VI.

## THE MAIN DIVISIONS

IN discussing the main divisions of a sermon we are concentrating our attention upon what is a very important part of a sermon. In this part of the message the material is classified, grouped and arranged in such a way that by remembering the divisions the audience will be able to recall both the material used and also the development of the discourse. If, for example, one is preaching on "The Story of a Rich Man," as given in Luke 12:13-30, he might discuss the subject under three heads; namely, his fortune, his folly, his fate. Here the simplicity, the progressiveness and the completeness of the divisions would make it easy to recall the whole of the discourse.

Divisions are thus for the purpose of making it easy to remember what was said, and the better the material is organized, the more simple and logical the unfolding of the thought, the better this purpose is accomplished. It is always a virtue in divisions to have them so stated and so related that one part suggests the next. This is the reason that sermons based upon analogy, the method used so much by Jesus, are so effective. This, however, is not meant to imply that all divisions can be so related that one part can suggest the next. There is a type of topical sermons, for example, where the proposition is supported by a number of independent divisions, and in the very nature of the case this connection or relationship can not be shown. An example of this type of theme would be, ''Reasons for Believing in Immortality,'' where the proposition might be supported by science, intuition, experience and the Bible. In the development of the subject under these four divisions there is no vital connection between them, they are like separate strands, whose arrangement or order of development might be determined by the psychological effect desired, but which have little or no logical sequence.

A sermon based on an analogy is one of the best types of sermons, because one part of the figure brings to mind the others. Thus, if one were preaching about ''The Trial of Jesus'' from Matt. 27:11-31, he might use, for his main divisions, the prisoner, the accusers, the judge, the verdict. The material of each division is thus not only easily remembered, but one division, because of its relation to the others, easily suggests them. Or it may be that in the divisions a cumulative effect is produced, each part continuing further the thought of the preceding section. Thus a sermon on "The Bible's First Question," based on Gen. 3:9, "Where Art Thou?" might have for divisions: (1) This question was addressed to a man after he had sinned. (2) It was addressed to a man who, after he had sinned, was trying to hide from God. (3) It was addressed to a man after he had sinned, and was trying to hide from God, for the purpose of restoring him to fellowship again.

2. A matter of considerable interest is the question whether one should gather his material before making divisions or whether divisions should be formed first. In the topical sermon it may be permissible to use either method, and where one is familiar with the material he expects to use he will probably formulate his divisions before doing very much collecting of material. This method may be well under those circumstances, although it does not conform to scientific principles, for the data should be collected before any attempt is made at organization, but if one should make his divisions before collecting his material, they should always be tentative, and subject to such modification as the discovery of unexpected facts may make necessary in order that his message may conform to truth.

In an expository sermon, however, it will almost, if not always, be necessary to study the material to be used before making divisions.

The character of an expository sermon makes this essential. Your material is not to be based directly upon your experience, but specifically upon the Scripture you intend to use. It may thus be an epitome or brief of what is contained in the passage, but, in common with the divisions of other types of sermons, skill is shown in the organization of the thought, and in the way in which materials are grouped and designated.

3. The simplest type of divisions for expository sermons is that which groups together a number of successive verses, and then brings them together under one head. Of this type is Dr. Drummond's treatment of 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, in his booklet entitled "The Greatest Thing in the World." His first division is based on verses 1-3, and is called "love contrasted"; the second part is on verses 4-6, and is given as "love analyzed"; the third is taken up with the remainder of the chapter, verses 7-13, and is called "love defended as the supreme gift." Here each part of the subject is explained, illustrated and applied in the order in which it occurs in the passage, while the whole chapter is organized and expressed in such a way as to give a convenient and helpful organization of the material involved. It is quite obvious that in order to secure the formulation of these divisions it was first necessary for Dr. Drummond to read and study his material well.

(b) Another method of producing expository outlines is to read over the Scripture and discover, if possible, related ideas under which the material can be classified. This method has to be employed when the plan suggested above can not be applied. To illustrate what is meant here, one might take for a theme "The Conversion of Lydia," using Acts 16:13-15 as a basis. This study could be presented under three headings: (1) What Paul Did. (2) What Lydia Did. (3) What the Lord Did.

(c) Still a third method is that of taking a text or verse of Scripture and giving an exposition of the separate words or phrases. This is the method which we have been most disposed to think of as the strictly expository plan. The great texts of the Scripture with significant words in them have been developed in such a way as to make clear their meaning and relation. Maclaren, in his "Exposition of Holy Scripture," uses John 3:16 in this way. He gives the sermon the title of "The Lake and the River." His divisions are: (1) The great lake—God's love. (2) The river—He gave His Son. (3) The pitcher—that whosoever believeth. (4) The draught—everlasting life. Here the four ideas —"God so loved the world," "He gave his only begotten Son," "that whosoever believeth on him," "should not perish, but have everlasting life," are first discussed and then bound together by a metaphor, which is valuable because it helps us to see the relation of what otherwise might be thought of as separate ideas.

It will thus be seen, although this is not meant as an arbitrary or inflexible rule, that the three types of divisions for expository sermons are best suited to the character and extent of the Scripture involved. The first plan seems best suited to certain narrative sections, or passages like 1 Corinthians 13, where there is a logical development of a subject. The second is more adaptable where this formal grouping of ideas is not present, and the last type can be used best in expository sermons limited to briefer portions of Scripture. All of these illustrations show, however, that in expository sermons the Scriptures must be well studied before the main divisions can be stated.

In arranging the divisions for an expository sermon, it is not necessary to include a discussion of all the Scripture from which the theme is taken, although this will frequently happen, as has already been shown. The parts used depend entirely upon the proposition, and for the completion of the proposition certain verses only may be selected and introduced into the discussion. An illustration of this is seen, for example, in a sermon on the theme, "What the World Has Always Said About Jesus," based upon John 7:10-31. The related ideas involved in the sermon might be: (1) He is a good man (v. 12). (2) "Not so, but he leadeth the multitude astray"—an impostor (v. 12). (3) "Many believed on him"—Son of God (v. 31). Here only such verses in the chapter are used or referred to as are relevant to the working out of the proposition, although the more of the Scripture that is appropriated the better.

4. Having now selected the theme, and decided upon the proposition, the next thing to do is to read over and over the portion of Scripture selected. This should not be done at one time, but should be done day by day, or at successive intervals, so that there is time for the assimilation of the thought, for the time element is one of the most necessary in forceful preaching. The material thus becomes a part of the preacher's own self, of his soul, and only such, after all, is really great preaching.

Having read the material over and over again, one begins to correlate and group his ideas, to find the essential things he wants to say, and outlines his thought. Now, the principles to guide him are the same for all classes of sermons.

(a) They should be *simple*. Love contrasted, love analyzed, love defended. What Paul did, what Lydia did, what the Lord did. These are simplicity itself. In the next place they should (b) be *progressive*. In some sermons this aspect is naturally more pronounced than in others. If one were preaching on the subject, "Why I Believe in the Church," it is quite conceivable that the order of the various points discussed could be changed without in any way affecting the logical working out of the proposition, except that the strongest argument would be placed last as in arranging the points in debate. In sermons of the cumulative type, on the other hand, like the one referred to in Gen. 3:9, the progressive aspect is very important.

In the next place the divisions should *complete the proposition.* When studying conversion, for example, as in the instance referred to above in the case of Lydia, when the participation of the preacher, the convert and the Lord are all included, there is nothing more to say about conversion. No one of these could be left out, however, without the demonstration of the proposition lacking completeness.

We will now apply these principles to some of the themes suggested in Chapter IV., the introductions to which were given in the last chapter.

The first example given was from John 1:16. Three ideas are presented in this text: (1) The fullness of Christ. (2) The fullness imparted to the believer. (3) The measure in which this fullness is imparted to the believer. This outline is of the cumulative type, the second and third divisions including what preceded them and then expanding the same thought. Each of these three divisions calls for an explanation, and gives splendid scope also for application. So, the first division might be developed by asking, What is comprehended in the fullness of Christ as conceived here? Next, How is this fullness imparted? Third, What determines the measure in which we receive it? It is the answer to these questions, especially as the first division is explained in the light of the context, that gives this sermon its expository character. The divisions are simple, following their order in the text; they are progressive, each including the preceding and advancing the thought; and they are complete, because they include all the ideas in the text and relate them.

We pass now to the second theme, which is interrogatory in its nature, "Is Seeing Believing?" The theme here becomes the proposition. For this we suggest the following divisions: (1) A sign is asked for in order to satisfy the demands of faith (v. 18). (2) Signs alone are inadequate for faith (vs. 23-25). (3) Signs are only of real value to faith for disciples (v. 22). Here the development would show that seeing is believing in only a limited way. The extent of belief, as a psychological fact, is determined in large measure by the disposition or attitude of the individual toward the object or evidence presented. In other words, prejudice, or bias, either scientific or philosophical, may hinder faith to the point that the most convincing proof may be rejected. To quote Jesus' words in another connection: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rise from the dead." An attitude of mind is possible where the plainest facts would not be accepted, according to these words of the Master.

The divisions used in this outline are based upon the method of related ideas, first by finding the theme discussed—the relation of signs to faith, and then by appropriating such of the material as is relevant to the proposition selected. The particular virtue of these divisions is to get illustrations from the context to say the things relating to faith that one might not be able to say; for example, to certain college audiences without his viewpoint meeting with some resentment.

The next topic suggested was "The Uplifted Christ," based upon John 3:14, 15. The divisions of a sermon built upon these verses would, like all instances based on analogies, be determined by the outstanding points of the comparison. Thus the following might be suggested: (1) The people sinned. (2) The people suffered. (3) The people were offered salvation. Here the points would be presented from the narrative in the Book of Numbers, and the application made as it is given in the Gospel by John. So far as any reference to the context would be made at all, it would be in showing that the prophecy concerning His death which Christ was making would be incomprehensible to one who could not understand earthly things.

Passing to the next example, we have the discussion on witnessing, which I have entitled: "Witnessing to the Truth." The proposition here might be: What was Jesus' testimony, and was it true? We are given two ideas: the truth and the witness to it. (1) What are the criteria of reliable testimony? (2) Did Jesus' witness meet these standards? (3) What are the facts to which He bore witness? The expository character of this outline is seen in the fact that an answer to the questions raised in (2) and (3) would require support from the Scripture text. And so we might continue suggesting divisions for the other themes given, but probably these illustrations will be sufficient to show the application of the principles laid down in the earlier part of the work.

From a review of these divisions it will be seen that the first thing to do is to read over well the Scripture which it is intended to use as a basis for the sermon. The next thing is to grasp the trend of the discussion, or the central thought in the narrative. Having done this, it is then necessary to get the particular aspect of the theme that is regarded as the most interesting and helpful for the congregation, and then build the sermon round this point or proposition, using the Scriptures to interpret life in such a way that in their pages people will see themselves reflected as in a mirror, not only of what they are, but what they ought to be. The Bible deals with the realities of life and with the fundamental laws of the spiritual world, and all normal persons in their better moments are concerned about both of these things, and it is for the preacher to show his audience that the questionings of the human soul have their counterpart and answer in the word of God. All successful preaching is bringing the human soul to know God, as He has revealed Himself to us. It is thus that ‘‘deep calleth unto deep,’’ the human and the divine meet, and the emptiness of the human heart finds its satisfaction in Him who is ‘‘all in all.’’

## Questions and Exercises on Chapter VI.

1. Do you regard main divisions to be essential in a good sermon? Give reason or reasons for your answer.
2. What special quality did Jesus’ messages have that made them so easy to remember?
3. What determines the number of divisions that a sermon should have? Is there a minimum or maximum number?

4. Why is a thorough study of the Scripture necessary to the formulation of divisions for an expository sermon?

5. In your judgment, would the divisions of an expository sermon be as difficult to state as those of a topical sermon? Explain the method of procedure in each case.

6. Make three expository sermon outlines whose divisions illustrate the three types mentioned in this chapter.

7. Would you regard it as necessary to make the headings of an expository sermon as prominent as those of a topical sermon? Discuss this point.

# CHAPTER VII.

## THE DEVELOPMENT

ANY sermon, to be effective, must be interesting. This interest may be created and maintained by the personality of the speaker, the literary style that he uses, or the keenness of his mental powers. While the material of the sermon may not do everything to make a discourse interesting, it will, nevertheless, do much toward accomplishing this end; and, whether or not one ultimately succeeds in preaching successfully, there need be no hesitation whatever in saying that a good expository development of his sermons will make each man the greatest success it is possible for him to be in his pulpit work. This is not an exaggeration; it is the calm, reflective judgment of every specialist in preaching, and, so far as the writer knows, there is no voice to the contrary.

A sermon must be interesting, we say, to be effective. But what makes a sermon interesting, so far as the development is concerned? Is it not its originality? In so many sermons one hears the preacher saying the things he has always said, and that others have said a thousand times before, and saying them in the same way. But when one hears a sermon, even though the thought may be familiar, but the material is presented in a new and striking manner, so that some one says afterwards, “I have never heard it put that way before,” or, “I never heard that explanation given to the passage,” it is an indication of originality. It is this quality that is characteristic of so many of the great preachers. They say things differently.

When we analyze this quality of originality as it is found in preaching, we find that it is attained in three ways, the use of any one of which, or a combination of them, will make any sermon original. These are intensive study, apt illustration and appropriate application. There is no variation from this rule; it works every time. Any sermon that possesses these qualities, even when presented in a very ordinary way, will be interesting, and any sermon which lacks them, even when delivered by a man of good average ability, will necessarily be uninteresting. This is one of the few rules of homiletics that is absolute, one which never fails, and one which every preacher can depend upon in every sermon.

2. Now, how are these essential qualities to be applied to the expository form of development? I believe that it is easier to apply them to sermons of this type than to any other. In the first place, expository sermons have, or should

have, their basis in intensive study. Here, indeed, is both the strength and weakness of the expository sermon. Where there is not real study, but merely a paraphrasing of the text, an explanation of things which need no explaining, or an exhaustive treatment of unimportant matters—whether geographical, historical or in any way remote from the people's vital interests—the sermon will inevitably be dry, tedious and uninteresting.

Thus the first step is intensive study. F. B. Meyer gives three suggestions here. First, he recommends investigating the original Hebrew or Greek text, although he admits that he had allowed his Hebrew "to get rusty." Of the two languages the Greek is by far the more useful. The richness of the Greek is full of suggestiveness in the fine shades of meanings which it reveals. The next step mentioned is the study of the text in the light of the entire book, in order to find out its purpose and to catch its spirit. "It is not enough to read about the Bible, we must read the Bible itself," he says. In relating these two parts he further asserts: "The first aim should be to know what the original text exactly meant; the next is to place it in the perspective of the entire book." The third suggestion is the study of commentaries and sermons. This advice, coming as it does from so successful an expositor, is worthy of consideration. The value of the first and second methods no one will question; they are especially valuable to the expository preacher, but as he follows these methods my own conviction is that he will be less concerned about carrying out the last suggestion.

(b) Expository preaching, we say, begins with intensive study of the Scriptures. Ability to use the original languages, however, and good habits of study need something more to make the sermon interesting. There must be in one's messages the human touch, the sympathetic spirit, and ability to bring to light those things that are of vital concern. Otherwise, one may be able to give correct geographical distances, historical facts or philosophical intricacies, and yet the soul that wants to know the way to heaven only hears about the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, or listens to an exercise in mental gymnastics. The expository sermon is not only explaining the Scripture, but also giving it an application. Here, however, is the distinct advantage of this type of sermon: the material to be developed is before one, and usually the theme selected, and especially the proposition, will have been chosen because one can sense in the material application that will be of value to the hearers.

The ability to see these vital relationships between the needs of the people and the Scriptures will increase as the preacher's knowledge of human nature and his observation increase. Every visit with his people will help to reveal their joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, and should help to reveal to the pastor their need of divine help and grace. All the objections that have been raised to expository preaching vanish when one can make his messages vital, applying to the lives of his congregation the inner truth of the word of God. But this vital element must be present or any preaching is a failure, and so far as this type of sermon is concerned it is no harder to make the expository approach interesting than any other. It is rather a matter of understanding it and striving to make a good application of it.

c) The third quality necessary is that of illustration. This is not a separate step from intensive study and application, but may be involved in either one. An illustration may be used to explain a point or it may serve the purpose of application, or may include both. "Bid my brother divide the inheritance with me," said a young man to Jesus. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness," replied the Master, "for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Then He illustrated the point. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully," and He went on to tell the story. Then, after He had shown the man's folly in thinking that life consisteth in the possession of material things, He applied the truth of the story: "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." So here an illustration serves the purpose of both explanation and application.

So that the general principles that apply to the development of all sermons apply to the expository, but these principles are certainly no harder to apply, and, if anything, are easier than to other types of sermons, and for the alert mind it gives a definiteness to his task that saves him labor both in finding his themes and in the development of them. Without doubt, people would rather have their problems interpreted by the word of God than by any human wisdom, no matter how much of a genius the speaker may be.

Expository sermons are interesting if only the charm of originality is given to them, and this can be done just the same as to any other sermons by intensive study, appropriate application and apt illustration.

In attempting now the development of the
3. divisions given in the preceding chapter, some difficulties are inevitable. As it has been pointed out, several factors enter into the selection of themes and also the material used in the development of them, and these will differ with different individuals. So that in proceeding with the study these difficulties need to be kept in mind. It is almost impossible to make applications also,

but if it can be shown how the divisions are developed from the text, and this principle is once understood so that it can be applied, then the purpose of this part of the work will have been accomplished.

In preaching an expository sermon, the first thing in the development is to explain and then to apply. *What* the application shall be will depend upon the needs of the congregation; *how* it shall be done depends upon the man and his literary style. He may do it by the descriptive method, as would be a splendid way to develop the first division of the sermon on John 3:14-16. He may do it by story or anecdote, as was Jesus' method with the young man referred to above, or he may do it by a less common, but very effective, method which I have called the catechetical method, where the discussion is advanced by means of asking questions and answering them. Since, however, that which is to be explained is the important thing, and that which makes expository sermons different from all others, the purpose in the following paragraphs is to show how the divisions may be developed from the Scriptures.

In the first sermon taken from John 1:16, the divisions suggested were: (1) The fullness of Christ. (2) The fullness imparted to the believer. (3) The measure in which the fullness is imparted. It was mentioned that in this sermon, where the Scripture is limited to one verse, the expository character of the development would be brought out by asking a series of questions; such as, What is meant by the fullness? How is it imparted? What decides the measure in which it is given? Even with these ideas presented, however, one can see how a topical rather than expository development might be followed, and the expository preacher will need to be on constant guard in this matter, especially if it has been his custom to preach mostly topical sermons.

Now, in answer to the first question, which is really the development of the first division, the following approach might be made. Is there anything suggested by the writer in the chapter that would indicate what he has in mind by the fullness of Christ? Let us see. In verse 3 we read: "All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made." In verse 10 again it states that "the world was made through him." In verse 14, "We beheld his glory," and that He was "full of grace and truth." There are several other suggestions in this section, but three at least are outstanding—power, grace and truth. Now, the enlargement or significance of these words would constitute the development of the first division. This method, it will be noted, is observing in the development what might reasonably be interpreted as the thought in the author's mind when he spoke of Christ's fullness.

The second division says that these phases of Christ's fullness are imparted to us, for "of his fulness we all received." How did we receive these gifts? We notice, first of all, "power." How is it received? There is nothing definite in the immediate context to reveal what is in the writer's mind, but he states later, in chapter 15, the way that Jesus said this power was transferred: "I am the vine, ye are the branches." The branches, you will notice, are the individual disciples, so that the power is that flow of life as silent, as unseen, as the flow of sap in the vine. Here is the opportunity for illustration of power in the life of the disciple. A very good one illustrating power over life's circumstances is given in Dr. S. D. Gordon's book, "Quiet Talks on Service," where he gives the following narrative: "A man was riding on horseback through a bit of timberland in one of the cotton States of the South on a bright October day. As he was riding along and enjoying the view, all at once he came across a bit of clearing in the trees, and in the clearing an old cabin, almost fallen to pieces, and in the doorway of the cabin an old negress standing. Her back was bent nearly double with the years of hard work, her face dried up and deeply bitten with wrinkles, and her hair white. But her eyes were as bright as two stars out of the dark blue. The man called out cheerily, 'Good morning, auntie; living here all alone?' She looked up, her eyes brighter yet with the thought in her heart, and in a shrill, keyed-up voice she said, 'Jes' me 'n' Jesus, massa.' '' This serves to illustrate the way in which the application of the power of Christ in the individual life may be set forth.

The second division is the impartation of grace. ''Grace,'' as a pleasing, inspiring quality in human life, could be explained and illustrated. So we say that a person is gracious, or has a gracious personality. How is the grace of Christ imparted to His disciples? Paul says to Philemon, ''The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit;'' that is, His graciousness, winsomeness, pleasing personality, become a part of your life. Now we become like our ideal, and our life in Christ produces His life in us, so that ''we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory'' (2 Cor. 3:18). So His grace is imparted to us by making Him our ideal, and keeping the ideal before us.

The impartation of truth is next. Truth is a word frequently used in the Gospel of John. ''If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'' ''Thy word is truth.'' ''I have given them thy word.'' So, by abiding in His word, we know truth. Truth thus comes through accepting Christ and His message. Here the application will depend upon the individual and the needs of the audience or occasion, and could be expanded *ad infinitum.* It might be truth about religion, or, more specifically, about salvation, service, or whatever end suits the immediate purpose.

We now come to the third division, and ask: In what measure is it imparted? The text itself is not very clear. Here the explanation of grace would seem to be, not graciousness, as in the disciple, but grace as supplied by God as a gift of divine favor, which is given to the disciples to surmount the difficulties of life. ''My grace is sufficient for thee'' would perhaps make clear the meaning of the word. Now, ''grace for grace,'' or, as the Revised margin says, ''grace upon grace,'' would seem to mean that as one supply is consumed another is given, and that from an unfailing source all the needs of man's soul are supplied. Man's need thus regulates God's supply.

The text of this sermon is a good one for exposition, because it contains a vital message. It relates itself to the context in such a way as to bring out its meaning, and it is capable of almost unlimited application. Such passages are a gold-mine for the expositor.

We now turn to the next sermon, which is somewhat different in character, the theme not being suggested by one verse, but rather by the whole narrative. This sermon introduces the problem of the relation of miracles to faith—a very timely and vital topic. The first division is: A sign is requested to satisfy the demands of faith, based upon John 2:18. How easy to apply here the thought of those whose disposition is not to accept the divinity of Jesus—the point at issue here—unless they can see, hear, understand everything, or have some kind of physical proof. Jesus did not give the proof which they wanted at the time, but indicated to them what would be the sign that would justify His claim to Sonship in a unique way. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (v. 19). Here is Jesus' testimony of what He regarded as the sign that gave evidence of His deity, and likewise the fact of the Jews' failure to grasp, as in nearly all His teaching, the significance and import of His word. Misunderstanding because of religious bias. In modern times scientific and philosophical predilections sometimes work the same way.

Why did not Jesus reveal Himself by some sign? There was a reason: those who were seeking it were out of harmony with His ideals. But supposing that He had given some sign, what would have happened?

Signs alone are inadequate for faith is asserted in the second division of the sermon. "During the feast many believed on his name, beholding the signs which he did" (v. 23). The conviction, or belief, on the part of these people was simply that produced by His miracles. They were of the matter-of-fact, logical type—those who believed because they saw. But, although they believed, it was a limited kind of faith; it was of such a character that "Jesus did not trust himself unto them, for that he knew all men" (v. 24). It was not strong enough, and the only reason suggested by the Scripture is that it was a religion based upon signs. The application and implication here need no enlargement, when so many are allowing materialistic considerations to become the basis of their faith. That which the people themselves thought was needed was insufficient. What, then, it may be asked, is the value of signs in religion?

Signs have their real value for disciples. "When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he spake this" (v. 22). In other words, signs are inadequate for faith by themselves, but are an aid to faith where there is a right disposition of heart to divine things. Children do not believe parents love them because they do things for them—tend them in sickness or send them to college; these signs are not the origin of their faith in parents, but they do help to establish the bond already made.

It will be noticed in this sermon that the thoughts presented are not in the order in which they are given in the text. This is really foregoing the logical order for the sake of the psychological, which is quite justifiable in homiletical procedure. The important thing is the completion of the proposition, and to do this effectively is the end in view, showing that the positions advanced are either stated or implied in the text.

One further illustration of expository development will probably suffice to make clear the method. We will take the theme, "Witnessing to the Truth," which is selected from John 3:11-34. The first division suggested was: What are the criteria of reliable testimony? The reliability of any witness depends upon three things: (1) His knowledge of the facts. It would obviously be no use witnessing to an event that one did not see, or only saw under such circumstances as to make the testimony worthless or at least unreliable. (2) The character of the person witnessing. The testimony of one with a known reputation for exaggerating or lying would not be regarded as highly as that of a careful observer of unimpeachable life. (3) The consistency of the testimony given. One may witness an event, and be in every way honest, but lack coherence in his testimony, showing that he can not be relied upon for giving absolute facts. Jesus came to bear witness. Now and here we come to the second division: Did Jesus' witness meet these standards? (1) Did He know the facts? He says: "We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen" (v. 11). John the Baptist says: "What he hath seen and heard, of that he beareth witness" (v. 32). (2) Does His character justify taking His message at its face value? Within the limits of the chapter we have Nicodemus' evidence: "We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him" (v. 2). (3) We next consider the consistency of his testimony. In all the complex situations in which Jesus was placed, He was never caught in any contradictory testimony. The proof of this would, of course, in the nature of the case, take in the whole of His life's work. The most carefully worked-out plans of scheming officials all failed to bring to light any mistakes on the part of Jesus. They might ask: "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar?" or, "If a woman marry seven brothers, whose wife shall she be in the resurrection?" Or, again: "Which is the great commandment in the law?" All these meet an adequate answer and leave the questioners baffled.

Having decided now upon the reliability of Jesus' testimony, we ask, What are the facts to which He bore witness? This gives ample scope for bringing before the people the ultimate things of life. In the text we have: man's sinfulness and lost condition (v. 14); God's love (v. 16); God's plan for man's salvation (vs. 15, 16, 17).

These things are vital in the religious realm. Some may say that they are the obsolete ideas of faith, but we still can call attention to the fact that Jesus is a greater authority than any teacher, or even group of teachers. In any case, one can throw the responsibility on the audience for belief; he has presented what the Scriptures have to say, and may leave the decision with his hearers. On any plane or basis that one may care to judge the matter, Jesus is an outstanding authority, and He knows because He has seen, and testifies to what He has heard.

In the discussion of this last sermon outline, one easily finds, in an age that is likely to regard the fundamentals of faith as old-fashioned, that it is easier to get respect for his ideas when he is repeating the words of Christ or the Biblical writers. Even the most radical pay respectful attention to a message that reflects the personality of the Master and His associates.

To summarize: that which marks the difference between the expository development and any other is this, that the expository sermon is worked out from the materials presented in the Scriptures, while other types do not ordinarily do so. The advantages of the expository plan are: that it saves the preacher time and energy, it develops his own soul, it keeps his thinking in line with Christ and the apostles, and gives greater authority to his messages.

Any preacher who will give the plan a fair trial will find the preparation of sermons an increasingly delightful task, his study of the word of God will have a more purposeful meaning, and his congregation will "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Again I say, people are interested in the Bible and its exposition, and among the most remarkable religious phenomena of recent times is the way large numbers of people of all classes will attend services to hear the Scriptures explained.

A capable and discerning critic recently pronounced Dr. Campbell Morgan "the most popular preacher in the English-speaking world," and suggests two main reasons for his success: (1) The commanding authority which comes of a firm, assured and uncompromising faith, and (2) his unique knowledge of the Bible, together with his genius for explaining and expounding it, and applying its teaching to the problems of our present-day life.

## QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES ON CHAPTER VII.

1. In the development of the main divisions, what principles are necessary in order for the sermon to be interesting?

2. In your judgment, is it any more necessary for an expository sermon to be uninteresting than any other?

3. Explain how intensive study is usually in a different field in an expository sermon from what it is in a topical.

4. How would you suggest that a preacher can become effective in making the application to expository sermons?

5. What type of man, mentally and religiously, would get the most satisfaction from preparing expository sermons?

6. What effect would expository preaching be likely to have upon the pulpit generally?

7. Ought our generation, with its educational standards, to be favorable to expository preaching?

# CHAPTER VIII.

## CONCLUSION

THE purpose of the conclusion is to apply the proposition. One can not devote too much thought to this part of the sermon. If he fails here, the effect of his message is greatly diminished; if he succeeds, a very ordinary sermon will become effective. Sometimes a very fine discourse fails because it is five minutes too long, and it is very important for a preacher to be able to tell, by looking into the faces of his congregation, when the place of exhaustion has been reached. "There is a psychological moment when the people of the audience, or most of them, have had just enough. They have not yet begun to tire, but they will in a few minutes. Do not let them have those few moments. Close as quickly as you can."

The conclusion may also be rendered ineffective by being too abrupt, in which case there is a failure to make clear the demonstration of the proposition, or to reach the appropriate emotional heightening.

These facts all show the need for carefulness in preparing the conclusion. One ought to know exactly the point he is aiming at, know the steps by which he expects to accomplish his purpose, and, as soon as he has reached his goal, stop. The danger of an unprepared or ill-prepared conclusion is, that one is likely to be soaring round, in almost hopeless plight, looking for a place to light. Not finding one, he keeps on soaring, and usually has to surrender after tiring his audience, and it would have been much better to yield before he reached this stage.

2. There are various methods that can be used to make the conclusion, or the appeal, as it is sometimes called, effective. There is, first of all, the plan of recapitulation, in which one restates his main headings to make more decisive his arguments, or make clear the demonstration of the proposition. If one has good divisions to his sermon, a pleasing effect will be produced on the audience as he restates them at the close of his discourse. Phelps says on this point that: ‘‘Clear, compact, forcible divisions fall into line beautifully in an epitome of the discussion. One of the most valuable single rules for constructing divisions is so to frame them that they can be easily and forcibly recapitulated at the close.’’ This method is particularly attractive to the thinking part of the congregation, and produces the effect on all that one has carefully prepared his sermon, and, if his points are well made, will cause his influence in the pulpit to increase steadily.

Just one word of caution, however, is necessary. If the message be of a highly emotional character, the change from the heights of emotion to the plains of argumentation is not likely to aid the effectiveness of the sermon, and is quite likely to be out of place. ‘‘Recapitulate a hortatory sermon, and you reduce it to a burlesque.’’

Most sermons, in the conclusion, reach a measure of feeling. This is necessary to move people to a decision, and every sermon is or should be preached ‘‘with a view to persuasion.’’ So that the conclusion will usually be planned to maintain or to develop this emotional character. The most successful ways of sustaining emotion are the use of illustrations or quotations.

A good illustration is always interesting. It makes it easy for one to leave the formal character involved in the development and with complete abandon look into the faces of the people and let them see how profoundly he believes what he is saying. It also stimulates interest at that point in the sermon where it is most important that one should have the undivided attention of the people. If he is making an appeal, it makes the appeal easy, for he knows just exactly what the state of his own mind and theirs will be when he concludes his illustration. It also makes certain that his message will be finished with the people interested.

There are some sermons, however, usually of the devotional type, that can be concluded very powerfully by means of a well-chosen quotation. This may be taken from the Scriptures, from one of the poets, or may be a few lines from a hymn. Hymns give expression to religious sentiment and feeling, and so any devotional topic may receive a fitting conclusion in this manner.

3. From a discussion of these general principles of an appropriate conclusion, it will be seen that it is the same for expository sermons as for any other. The character of the conclusion is not determined by the type of sermon, whether expository, topical, textual or inferential, but is rather decided by the didactic or hortatory elements by which it closes. The purpose of all sermons is the same—to persuade, to bring conviction, to lead to action.

In proceeding, therefore, to suggest conclusions for the themes that have already been presented, there is this obvious difficulty, that the emotion reached by one may be of a much higher degree than that by a preacher of a different temperament. It is for this reason almost impossible to attempt this part of the outline. The man and the occasion must determine this, and each individual must then use the method that comports best with his own idea of the fitness of things.

## QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES ON CHAPTER VIII.

1. Are conclusions equally important for all kinds of sermons?

2. What type of sermon can be concluded most effectively by the method of recapitulation?

3. What kind of a conclusion is best suited to a sermon that is hortatory in character?

4. Would you suggest writing out the last few sentences of a conclusion?

5. What quality is necessary on the part of the preacher to be able to recognize when an audience is growing tired?

6. Explain how the principles governing conclusions to effective sermons make it difficult to assign any particular kind to the expository sermon.

# CHAPTER IX.

## QUALITIES REQUISITE FOR SUCCESS AS AN EXPOSITOR

1. TO be a good expository preacher, a man must first of all have a *good general education.* A man with an untrained mind may give a good hortatory discourse, but it is practically impossible for him to preach expository sermons. One with a good general education will benefit from his training in literature, which will give him an appreciation of the best thought and its expression. He will receive much help from the study of logic, which will enable him to balance arguments and to present his thought in an orderly way. He will be helped by the languages, especially the Greek, which will reveal to him the fine shades of meaning of the words used by Christ and the apostles. His knowledge of history will enable him to understand the New Testament in its setting in world events. Psychology and philosophy will show him how men have tried to solve the ultimate problems of life and have failed. There is no type of sermon which offers such wonderful scope for all the resources of education as does the expository.

In intensive and extensive study, both in its analytical and synthetical character, this is the method par excellence for the educated man.

2. The second quality of importance is *Bible training.* By Bible training I mean having such a broad understanding of the books of the Bible as will enable him to relate the various stages of the history of revelation in such a way as to "rightly divide the word of truth." I do not believe that any one can become a great expositor who does not understand the significance which attaches to the New Testament and makes it different from the Old. The more thorough has been one's training in the Scriptures, and the clearer his comprehension of the revelation of God contained therein, the better is he prepared to efficiently apply divine truth in exposition. And, after all, is not this the preacher's function? Should it not be his purpose to enlighten his people concerning the great fundamentals of religion, and if he does not use the Bible as the source for his knowledge, where shall he turn? Whatever authority one may care to give to the sacred writings, one thing is admitted by all, and that is that every minister should know and understand what the Scriptures teach. To know, understand and explain the Scriptures in the pulpit is the first great task of the preacher, and this is but fulfilling the end of expository preaching.

3. A third important characteristic is study, or the possession of studious habits. One who attempts exposition and does not apply himself with sufficient industry and concentration is most surely headed for failure. Expository sermons that are effective can not be produced on Saturday for the pulpit on Sunday, except as the material then organized has been the subject for meditation all the week. Any attempt to evolve sermons on short notice is likely to result in repeating platitudes and generalities, ideas that lie on the surface, which everybody knows, and which fail to arouse interest on the part of the audience or enthusiasm in the soul of the preacher himself. One must meditate on the theme to be developed, study the relation of the thought to its immediate or remote context, and get into the spirit of the writer, endeavoring to live over in his own soul, as far as may be possible, the ideals advanced. To enjoy any foreign country, particularly the older civilizations of Europe, one must get into the spirit of the people, the atmosphere of the environment; he must have what we call historical insight; and to enjoy, appreciate and express the spirit of the Scriptures one must be more than a Biblical tourist. This attitude is not an intellectual condition purely, nor is it to be regarded simply as a necessity of the situation, but it is a thrilling experience in the spiritual realm, one which is

a joy and a delight of the most elevating kind. It is both an opportunity and a pleasure. "The highest point of sermon utterance is when a preacher is 'possessed,' and certainly, in the judgment of the writer, such possession comes oftenest and easiest to a man who has lived, slept, walked and eaten in fellowship with a passage for the best part of a week."—*Meyer.*

The last thing to be specifically mentioned as a quality needed for expository work is that of oratorical skill. This quality is the ability to take the idea involved in a passage of Scripture and express its meaning and application with such interest and enthusiasm as shall awaken in the hearers a like response. If, however, one speaks as if he were describing something in which he has no very vital interest, his message will be weak and will fail to make any very deep impression upon the hearers. Why should it be said that in the theater fiction is presented as if it were truth, and that in the church truth is presented as if it were fiction? The only reason is that the actor tries to live his part, get into the spirit of the character he represents, and the preacher is apt to deliver his message oftentimes as though it were something apart altogether from himself. The plea here being made and asserted as necessary is to put soul into exposition. This the writer makes bold to declare is not only the greatest privilege, and one of the most thrilling experiences in the realm of the spirit that falls to the preacher's lot, but is also a method that will never fail to interest and to help any congregation.

### QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES ON CHAPTER IX.

1. Why should every educated preacher make use of the expository method in his sermons?

2. What kind of Bible training would you regard as most helpful for expository preaching?

3. Would a man whose faith was not very strong in the essentials of Christianity be likely to make a good expositor? Give reasons for your answer.

4. To what type of preacher would the intensive study of the Bible be most attractive?

5. Would a preacher of wavering faith be helped by preaching expository sermons? Explain how, if you think he would.

6. Do you agree with the quotation given that the didactic can be combined with the passionate in preaching?

7. Do you think that the combination of clearness in exposition and intensity in feeling are often combined in the same individual? Can they be acquired?

# CHAPTER X.

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE EXPOSITORY METHOD ON THE VOICE IN DELIVERY OF SERMONS

THE ordinary sermon is apt to be preached in much the same tone of voice, either high or low, except as personal experiences are related to break this tone, or illustrations used that cause one to make a change to colloquial speech. "The man who is uniformly earnest, uniformly tender, uniformly emphatic; the man who is striving to say something appealing and helpful with every breath he draws—becomes wearisome." One of the saving qualities of interesting speech is variety.

The expository method gives this variety to preaching, for exposition requires one tone, and the change to illustration and application requires a changed inflection. Exposition gives a much greater opportunity for the conversational style of speech, which is fast becoming the method of great preachers and orators. Dean Brown says: "The tone of dignified conversation furnishes the staple method for effective delivery. It wears better than any other kind of speech.'' It is said to be the method used by the great parliamentary speakers of England of this generation, such as Herbert H. Asquith, Arthur J. Balfour and Lloyd George. This does not mean because the style is conversational that the delivery is without vitality or spiritless; it is rather the highest art by means of the simple and natural. ''Oratory,'' said Dr. Curry, ''is enlarged conversation.''

Professor Smyth, in addressing his students on this point, said: ''Have something to say. Make sure of that first. Then say it. Don't preach or elaborate it. Just say it as simply and naturally as you would say it in conversation.''

Azora Davis expressed a similar sentiment. ''Perhaps,'' he said, ''we may be helped most if we insist upon the idea of preaching as dignified and sincere conversation on a religious subject. The best preacher is really the best talker.''

Exposition enables one to be the most natural in the pulpit. It develops ease, freedom, and, where there is an understanding of the right principles of public speaking, should lead to gracefulness of gesture. Through the use of this method one can the most easily adopt the conversational style, which is the most interesting, the most effective, and the one which never tires the hearers.

There is perhaps a deeper reason, however, why the expository method aids the delivery.

This has already been hinted at in an earlier chapter. The true oratory begins with the man; it is the expression of that which is in his soul. Intensity in public utterance, if it is not artificial, is only possible when the man himself is deeply stirred. We would all prefer to listen to a man of moderate ability preach, who is thoroughly sincere, than one of greater gifts whose convictions regarding, his message we very much doubt. [Perhaps (?) the pulpit is lacking in great preachers to-day because it is lacking in men of great conviction.] It is true, however, that the outstanding men of our time, as in all time, are the men who have no misgivings about the inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Christ and the reality of a future existence.

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What bearing now does this discussion have upon expository preaching? It means this: that one's greatest power in the pulpit will be proportionate to the extent to which his message has become a part of himself. Now, how far does the expository method help in this direction? May we refer again to Dr. F. B. Meyer's definition? An expository sermon is one on "an extended portion of Scripture on which the preacher has concentrated head and heart, brain and brawn, over which he has thought and wept and prayed, until it has yielded up its inner secret, and the *spirit of it has passed into his spirit.*" No other type of sermon makes such a demand. We may dwell upon our themes, we may read ourselves full, and meditate upon the material collected, but in the expository sermon our thought is assimilated to the spiritual ideals and standards of the inspired authors. It is this that develops conviction, enthusiasm, and enables one to speak with authority on the deep things of life.

To be more specific in regard to the way by which the preacher may become absorbed in his theme, we present the method used by F. B. Meyer, in his discussion of ‘‘The Expositor at Work.’’ He says that ‘‘probably on Sunday night, when the family has dispersed, he will take his Bible in hand and turn to the paragraph next in order to that from which he has preached during the day. The emotions that have wrought within his soul have not died down.’’ He does this while he is still feeling the thrill of his message, and scans ‘‘the paragraph next in order until probably its salient features, its lesson, or its pivotal sentences, grip him.’’ He then makes a few rough notes. Nothing more is attempted at that time, but in the subconscious realm something has been started. As the days pass he puts on this paper, containing the rough notes, ‘‘the fugitive thoughts, with footstep light as a fairy’s, that may flit across his soul.’’ Next he investigates the original text, and then places it in the perspective of the entire book. Then he turns to commentaries and sermons; "they set us thinking." The main preparation, however, is the reading and re-reading of the Biblical text. He commends the method of another great expositor who tells us "that he will read a given book, which he has set himself to expound, some ten or twenty times through, that he may catch the spirit of the author, and become steeped in his ruling motive and purpose."

It is thus the method of preparing the sermon that makes the man and his message identical, so that when he preaches his style is natural, his words are spirit and life, and that which comes through his lips comes from his soul. In this way soul and speech combine, and the most effective speech is the inevitable result.

## QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES ON CHAPTER X.

1. What do you regard as the chief cause of the monotone in preaching?

2. Explain how expository preaching requires greater variety because of the character of the development.

3. How does the expository method bring the preacher and his materials closer together?

4. Could an expository preacher be artificial in the use of the voice, and, if so, how would you locate the cause?

# CHAPTER XI.

## SERMONS ILLUSTRATING THE DIFFERENT USE OF SCRIPTURE

THE three sermons that follow are for the purpose of illustrating more fully the various ways in which the Scripture may be used in exposition. These sermons, and also those that follow in the next chapter, are not written *in extenso,* but with sufficient fullness, we hope, to make clear the point under consideration.

The first of these is to show the way a sermon may be built upon a whole book; the second, the plan of constructing one on a part of a book; and the third, by making use of one verse only.

### REJOICING ALWAYS. PHIL. 4:4.

*Introduction.*—The apostle Paul's life reflects at all times joyousness, hopefulness, happiness. This is nowhere seen more than in his letter to the Philippians. Several times in this Epistle he refers to his joy and the causes from which it sprang. Thus we hear him say: "In every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy" (1:4). "In every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice'' (1:18). ''Make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love'' (2:2). This note of joy reaches its climax in the exhortation that he gives to his readers in 4:4, where he says: ''Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice.''

There are times when it is not hard to rejoice, but this injunction has its significance in the word ''always,'' and, as if he anticipated that some would think that he did not mean all that his language implied, he repeats: ''Again I will say, Rejoice.'' He was simply urging the Christians at Philippi to do what he had always done. It is not a natural disposition or attitude to rejoice always, however, and the study of this letter reveals the source and character of this abiding quality in the life of the Christian.

I would like now to demonstrate this fact by showing the setting of the text and its relation to the book as a whole.

1. Let us first of all consider *the church at Philippi* to whom it was addressed. It was founded on Paul's second missionary journey, the account of which is given in the sixteenth chapter of the Book of Acts. It had its origin in rather dramatic circumstances, one of the leading converts being a Roman jailor who became a Christian as the result of an earthquake. All we know of the *personnel* of the congregation is

that a woman named Lydia, a merchant, and the jailor's household were included among its members.

Apparently it was not a wealthy congregation, as is learned from 2 Cor. 8:1-3, for Paul speaks of "their deep poverty." They were generous, however, gladly giving of their substance, having "fellowship in the ministering to the saints."

2. It was not strange that nine years after the church had been established, when they heard that Paul was in prison, they sought out some way to have fellowship with him, and *sent him a gift.*

We can well imagine that, at the close of their weekly service for the breaking of bread, the jailor might have addressed himself to the meeting somewhat as follows: "Word has come to us that our brother Paul is in prison in Rome. I served as a jailor for a number of years, and I know what his condition must be, and the way that he has to live. You all know what he did for our church here. If it had not been for his sacrifice, we would none of us be Christians to-day. I wonder if we can't do something to show our appreciation. We can help him, and it will cheer him up to let him know that he is not forgotten by the church at Philippi." Then I can imagine Lydia getting up and saying: "That is a splendid idea. I would be glad to do my part.'' And to this the church would unanimously agree.

But there was no parcels-post delivery, and no money-order service, and the question would arise: How shall we send the gift? At this point I can again imagine a young man who was a member of that congregation standing up and saying: "Well, if there is no other way, I will be glad to see that it reaches him.'' And so the gift is prepared by the church, and Epaphroditus started on his journey.

Epaphroditus reached his destination in safety, fulfilled his errand, and remained some time in Rome. While there he took sick. The church at Philippi got to hear about it, and they became worried concerning him. Hearing of their concern, Paul urged Epaphroditus to return and remove their anxiety. How beautiful was this fellowship between the church, Paul and Epaphroditus as expressed in their consideration for each other. Thus Paul says: "I counted it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need; since he longed after you all, and was sore troubled because ye had heard that he was sick'' (Phil. 2:25, 26).

3. As Epaphroditus was about to return to Philippi, Paul did just what we would expect him to do; he gave this young man a *letter*

for the church *expressing his appreciation for the gift* which they had sent him. This letter is none other than our Epistle to the Philippians. In it he writes: "I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at length ye have revived your thought for me." "Ye did well that ye had fellowship with my affliction." "Not that I seek for the gift; but I seek for the fruit that increaseth to your account." And now Epaphroditus takes the letter to the church, and hands it over to the presiding elder—perhaps the jailor himself.

And now, on another Lord's Day, Paul's message is read to the congregation. I can imagine the jailor saying to them that he has a letter from Paul, thanking them for their gift. He reads it to them, and, in due course, comes to the words "rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice." Then I can hear him say: "Isn't that just like Paul? We thought we would be able to make him happier in his unfortunate circumstances by our remembrance, but he says, 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content.' Now he turns to us and tells us to rejoice. I remember the night he was in the jail at Philippi, how, with his feet fast in the stocks, at midnight he was 'singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening.' Nothing seems to daunt him or to depress him. When his friends are gone and he is alone, when he is in prison and age comes upon him, he still retains his spirit, and out of his own experience he says to us, 'Rejoice always,' and he might have added, 'just like I do.' "

Conclusion.—There is something in Christianity that enables us to rise above the vicissitudes of life, and, in success or failure, plenty or poverty, youth or age, to say "I am content," and "I am happy." May we all experience this power and thus we shall "rejoice always."

## A CALL TO PRAISE. (Ps. 65:11.)

Introduction.—The sixty-fifth and sixty-sixth Psalms are expressions of praise. They sound as though they were composed about the same time; at any rate, they express the same spirit of adoration. From the text in 65:11, it would seem as if that verse were composed at the end of the year, or, at least, after the year's harvest was secured.

Now the Psalmist says, "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness." Most of us, perhaps, would not find it difficult to enumerate ways in which God has been good to us, but it is my purpose to show what the Psalmist himself had in mind when he spoke of God's goodness. To find out this let us review these two Psalms to see if we can find any statements or suggestions as to what the character of this goodness was.

### 1. MATERIAL PROSPERITY.

"Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it,
Thou greatly enrichest it;
The river of God is full of water:
Thou providest them grain, when thou hast so prepared the earth.
Thou waterest its furrows abundantly;
Thou settlest the ridges thereof:
Thou makest it soft with showers;
Thou blessest the springing thereof. . . .
The pastures are clothed with flocks;
The valleys also are covered over with grain;
They shout for joy, they also sing." —Ps. 65: 9, 10, 13.

In this quotation the author finds God's goodness in "grain" and "flocks." The hills and valleys are "clothed" and "covered" so that they "shout" and "sing."

The United States has passed through a period of unparalleled prosperity. We have had bounteous harvests; we have motor-cars, radios, and little or no actual poverty as it is known in Europe and other parts of the world. "The total realized income of the nation, as found by the President's committee, stood at not quite $66,000,000,000 for 1919. It dropped to a low point of $63,000,000,000 in 1921. Since then it has been mounting, and for 1928 is put at $89,000,000,000. Every figure of wealth that we know has steadily climbed. The index value of sales in department stores has gone from 87 in 1921 to 108 in 1928, and in mail-order houses from 67 to 137. In 1919 we had only two thousand mechanical refrigerators, and in 1928 we had nearly a million and a quarter. During the same period, washing-machines ran from less than a million a year to around six million. Neither mechanical refrigerators nor washing-machines can be considered as appointments of the wealthy. Every one is familiar with the tremendous increase in automobiles, in motion-picture houses, and in comforts and necessities of life, as well as in the pleasures of life generally.''

What is the significance of these material blessings? The Psalmist saw in all material prosperity a call to praise. Have we enough religious feeling to cause our prosperity to lead us to praise God for His goodness?

2. Then, again, we find in the Scriptures another cause of praise in *God's providence in history.*

> ''Come, and see the works of God;
> He is terrible in his doing toward the children of men.
> He turned the sea into dry land;
> They went through the river on foot:
> There did we rejoice in him.'' —Ps. 66:5, 6.

David saw God's providence in the beginning of Israel's history. When was God ''terrible in His doings toward the children of men''? Was it not when Pharaoh hardened his heart against Him? There were the plagues of blood, frogs, lice, flies, murrain, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and the destruction of the firstborn. God was terrible then. ‘‘He turned the sea into dry land,’’ and ‘‘they went through the river on foot’’ following the plagues. This was at the beginning of their history, for we read in this connection: ‘‘This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you’’ (Ex. 12:2). Through all the years from the beginning David could see the blessings of God’s providence.

How closely this comes to our own national history. Surely no people on this planet can enter into this phase of God’s goodness as can the American people. The Pilgrims braved the dangers of the stormy deep in a frail barque, trusted themselves to the inhospitable shores of a bleak and unknown coast, faced pestilence and famine because they believed that God was leading them. We would probably be a more grateful people if we had to share such privations for awhile; but if the members of that little company could have shared our circumstances for a short time, what songs of praise would have burst from their grateful hearts!

Have we enough imagination as we review the conditions under which our nation has had its rise to appreciate God’s providence in our history? Then: ‘‘Make a joyful noise unto God,’’ ‘‘sing forth the glory of his name: make his praise glorious.’’

But just about this place some one who has not recently benefited materially, but who has perhaps met with financial reverses, or perhaps physical disability, will say: "Well, that is all right for most people, but it does not apply to me. I have been having a hard time." The Psalmist anticipated this objection, for he includes it in God's goodness.

3. TRIALS THAT HAVE PROVED US.

> "For thou, O God, hast proved us:
> Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.
> Thou broughtest us into the net;
> Thou layedst a sore burden upon our loins.
> Thou didst cause men to ride over our heads;
> We went through fire and through water;
> But thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place."
> —Ps. 66: 10-12.

Trials are good or bad according to the way we receive them. Many Scriptures refer to God's direct testing of men. "Thou hast proved us." "Thou hast tried us." The Scriptures are full of the recognition of God allowing His people to be tested. Doubtless the Lord gets blamed for a great deal more than He is directly responsible for here. The consequences of deliberately violating nature's laws should hardly be made a charge against the Lord, as it often is, but this can still be left an open question as to what part the Lord may or may not have in our misfortunes.

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Adversity, however, does often prove helpful to the spiritual life. "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word" (Ps. 119:67). This has been repeated in the life of many persons in modern times. Nothing is more dangerous to the spiritual life than prosperity, both for the nation and for the individual.

Paul gave us a good statement of the Christian attitude when he said: "We know that to them that love God all things work together for good." Whatever comes, if it is for good, may be included in God's goodness, and so why should it hinder praise? Ought it not rather to promote it? Was not the Psalmist right here?

4. But the richest expression of God's goodness is in what might be termed *spiritual satisfaction.*

> "As for our transgressions, thou wilt forgive them.
> Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee,
> That he may dwell in thy courts:
> We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house,
> Thy holy temple." —Ps. 65:3, 4.

> "Come, and hear, all ye that fear God,
> And I will declare what he hath done for my soul."
> —Ps. 66:16.

David notices here with much gratitude the satisfaction that grows out of forgiveness. He had no misgivings about the reality of sin, or about the joy of sins forgiven. He knew himself to be a sinner, and he knew God could and would forgive, and he praised Him for the consciousness of this happy state.

He also realized the satisfaction which came from fellowship with God. "Satisfied with the goodness of thy house." He knew the joy of praise, of communion with the Infinite in the quiet of His "holy temple." Only one who could appreciate this highest activity of the human soul can know what he means by being satisfied with the goodness of the house of the Lord. So he could say: "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul."

Conclusion.—Surely He has crowned us with His goodness. Then:

> **"Make a joyful noise unto God, all the earth:**
> **Sing forth the glory of his name:**
> **Make his praise glorious." —Ps. 66: 1, 2.**

## AN EARLY DESCRIPTION OF CHRIST.

### (Isa. 53:3.)

Introduction.—"Let any one steep his mind in the contents of this chapter, then read what is said about Jesus in the Gospels. As He stands under the shadow of the cross, see if there is not the most complete correspondence between the two. In Jesus of Nazareth alone, in all history, but in Him perfectly, has the prophecy had a fulfillment . . . it will suit no other.''

I want to show how this prophecy, given several hundred years before Christ's advent, had its fulfillment in the life of Jesus.

1. He Was Despised and Rejected.—There were several reasons that brought about this attitude toward the Messiah.

There were the *circumstances of His birth.* He did not come of any distinguished family. ''Is not this Joseph's son?'' the people said. He was not born in a town of any importance. ''Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?'' was asked. Everything connected with His birth, so far as the standards of this world were concerned, made Him unattractive. He was ''as a root out of a dry ground.''

Then there was the *manner of His life.* He wore no clerical robes. There was no trumpet sounding His coming. He used simple language and talked about simple things—such as flowers, birds, seed, meal, net; and, worse still, He mingled with common people. To a cold, formal, aristocratic group, the influential people of His day, this attitude made Him very undesirable.

Then, more than this, there was the *unpopular character of His message.* Many of the religious people of His day found His words so much at variance with the standards and ideals of their time that they could not see how

His message could be true. Some few did believe, but feared the ostracism that would inevitably follow an open confession of belief, for "even of the rulers many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." But "the common people heard him gladly."

It is hard to receive truth when it conflicts with accepted standards. It is difficult to get people to make an open confession of Christ when it means breaking off association with friends who are indifferent or opposed to the Christian faith. It takes courage that many do not have.

> "Our Lord is now rejected, and by the world disowned,
> By the many still neglected, and by the few enthroned."

2. A MAN OF SORROWS.—Jesus' ideals and the application of them brought about this result.

He had *sympathy for the suffering.* We know how our hearts go out when those we love are called upon to endure pain. Christ's love was universal, and love makes the sorrow of another one's own. "They brought unto him many that were sick, and he had compassion on them." His life seemed as if it were spent in a great hospital, and yet that is the way we like to think of Jesus—as One who knows what it is to suffer, and who cares.

He was also a man of sorrows because of *His contact with sin.* A musical nature is sensitive to discords. The worst punishment that could be inflicted on a good, moral person is to be compelled to live in the midst of wickedness. Even Lot, sinner though he was, when he went down to Sodom to live, was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." What must it have meant to Christ to live in the atmosphere of Palestine in His day?

Then, there was also Jesus' *disappointment in people.* In His home town they tried to throw Him over a cliff. Of Jerusalem He said: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not!" Then, He was betrayed by a professed follower and close associate. All these sorrows were eclipsed, however, by the sorrow of His final rejection on the part of the Jews, and the sufferings of the cross.

> "Man of Sorrows, what a name
> For the Son of God, who came
> Ruined sinners to reclaim.
> Hallelujah! What a Saviour!"

3. Acquainted with Grief.—He was lonely. Even His own followers could not understand Him. It was a constant struggle to impart to them the deeper meaning of His life.

He bore all this, however, in order *that He might be one with us.* There will be no Gethsemane that we will ever be called upon to pass through darker than the one when the Son of God said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." No cross that we will ever be called upon to bear will be heavier than the one the Master carried to Calvary. It is thus that He is our companion in all our toils.

That He is one with us means also *that we may be one with Him.* "There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved."

> "I must needs go home by the way of the cross,
> There's no other way but this;
> I shall ne'er get sight of the gates of Light,
> If the way of the cross I miss."

Conclusion.—In Holman Hunt's picture, "Jesus, the Light of the World," Jesus is represented as knocking at a door which is closed to Him. He seeks an entrance. It is a picture of His approach to our lives. You and I are back of that door, and the latch is on the inside. "Behold," says Jesus, "I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

# CHAPTER XII.

## SERMONS ILLUSTRATING THE DIFFERENT METHODS OF DEVELOPMENT

IN the sermons that are here given, an effort has been made to show how the material of the text may be used for the development of pulpit discourse.

The first is what we have called the summary
1 method, where successive verses of Scripture are
discussed and then brought together under an
appropriate heading; the second illustrates the
plan of developing a theme from a portion of
2 Scripture by using only such passages as are
relevant to the demonstration of the proposition,
while the third illustrates something of the devel-
3 opment when limited to a verse, or otherwise
small portion of Scripture.

## EXPOSITION OF THE NINETEENTH PSALM.

INTRODUCTION.—This Psalm gives a splendid introduction to the study of the chief sources of religion—nature, the Bible and self. It is one of the most popular of all the Psalms, for it has found a responsive note in the life of all who are conscious of a Presence that disturbs them "with the joy of elevated thoughts."

1. The first part of the Psalm is a eulogy on the material universe, or might be stated as *God's revelation of Himself in nature.*

"The heavens declare the glory of God." Here David seems to think of the heavens as preachers, proclaiming God's power and glory.

"Day unto day uttereth speech." To him they are continuous in their proclamation—"day unto day." It is not preaching for twenty minutes or an hour, then ceasing, but every day and every hour, and no vacations.

"Night unto night showeth knowledge." It is not only the length of time that they preach that is significant, but they say something—they impart knowledge.

"There is no speech nor language." They are not speaking in any tongue whose understanding has geographical limits—it is not in English, French or German—and "their voice is not heard."

"Their line is gone out through all the earth." There is no measuring of their influence, and their words go to "the end of the world." Man speaks to a large audience when in person he addresses ten thousand people, and even the radio still leaves man out of all competition with the heavenly bodies so far as the scope of his influence is concerned.

"In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun." The sun in his setting in the heavens is like the Oriental bridegroom. He rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. And what a race, as he flies past at the speed of 4,407 miles per hour, radiating light in his path at the rate of 186,427 miles per second. His race is "from the end of the heavens," and "there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

At the end of verse 6 the thought changes, and the writer's mind occupies itself with a eulogy of God's law, or,

2. GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF IN THE SCRIPTURES (vs. 7-11).—"The law of the Lord is perfect." The reference here, of course, is to a much smaller portion of Scripture than we have to-day, probably not much more than the law of Moses. Yet what is said here is still true of that body of writings we call the Bible. It "is perfect." Is there anything that we feel could be added to give us more light on the way of securing closer fellowship with God, or for showing us how to live?

"Restoring the soul." Nature is a wonderful revealer of God, but who ever heard of the soul being restored by admiring the trees, the mountains or the waterfalls? When we want definite direction on life's practical problems, we must turn to the revealed will of God. Our help must be personal.

"The testimony of the Lord is sure." We can depend upon it. "Academic truth is very precarious," says one of our leading educators. "That which was true yesterday is error to-day; that which is true to-day will be error to-morrow." We know how true this statement is in our rapidly changing world. There are few large universities that would use a text-book in any subject that has been published for more than ten years. How refreshing it is to read of something that is permanent and "sure." "The word of the Lord abideth for ever."

"Making wise the simple." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It guides the life—directs one's destiny. That is why it is the supreme wisdom.

"The statutes of the Lord are right." Human laws are only as high as the morals of the group making them. They never represent the ideals of the best people, except as they may receive their direction from them. The statutes of the Lord are a reflection of His divine character, and, because He is holy, it follows "as the night the day," that they must be right.

"Rejoicing the heart." Many were made very happy at the enactment of the Prohibition law in the United States. They rejoiced because they believed it to be right. The feeling thus experienced, however, but faintly illustrates the joy the righteous have in the law of God.

"The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether" and "in keeping of them there is great reward."

> "In the corrupted currents of this world
> Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,"

but all this will be changed, for there are no legal technicalities or perversions of justice to prevent man from facing the consequences of his life. In keeping God's law "there is great reward," no matter whether we think of it in its present or future aspect.

Another complete change of the thought takes place in the Psalm after verse 11, and we are directed to look away from the book to ourselves, or to see:

3. THE REVELATION OF GOD IN HUMAN LIFE (vs. 12-14).—Some of the greatest minds have recognized conscience as the most direct contact that man has with his Maker. It is here that one is conscious whether or not he is in tune with the Infinite, or whether the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures is being fulfilled in his life. After all, what is the value of nature's voice and God's revelation of Himself in the Scriptures if they do not cause man to take an introspective view and make an inventory of his moral standards.

Three kinds of weaknesses are brought to light in connection with man's moral nature.

‘‘Hidden faults,’’ or, as it is translated in the King James Version, ‘‘secret sins.’’ This doubtless refers to the little things that discount our lives. The things the world does not see and are known only to ourselves. Like the white ants that are found in some parts of the world, they may make no perceptible change in the outward appearance, and yet are capable of honeycombing the life and destroying its power and influence.

‘‘Presumptuous sins.’’ ‘‘Presumptuous’’ has been translated as referring to that which boils or bubbles. The control of excited impulses seems to be what is in the mind of David here. There is in the text some pathos in the words ‘‘thy servant.’’ The writer was conscious of his own weakness in this particular. Just as Peter, out of his experience, writes in his Epistle: ‘‘Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.’’ Fire is a good servant, but a bad master, as most of us know.

‘‘The great transgression.’’ There is not only the sin of enfeebled wills and inflamed passions, but there is that other of casting off all allegiance to God. So even an apostle said: ‘‘I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.’’

Conclusion.—How fittingly the Psalmist closes this meditation by saying:

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart,
Be acceptable in thy sight,
O Lord, my rock, and my redeemer."

## ANCIENT VIEWS IN MODERN LIFE.

### (John 7:10-31.)

Introduction.—We are sometimes apt to feel concerned because of the skeptical attitude taken toward the claims of Christ. We become fearful lest beliefs that we have held sacred through the years are going to be shattered. We may, however, find some satisfaction and confidence in the ultimate triumph of Christianity in the fact that the prevailing differences of opinion have always existed and faith has lived in spite of them. The first opinion expressed in the narrative selected for our study is that He was "*a good man*" (v. 12). This judgment was one that had much to commend itself to the critics of Jesus' day.

They saw Jesus, and He *looked* like a good man. We have no photographs or other likenesses of Christ. All the productions of the past only represent the artist's ideal, but there is such unanimity of opinion concerning His personality that no one has ever objected to a representation of the highest character in the face of Jesus. He must have looked like a good man. The face is the indicator of the soul; it is the register of the thoughts. Consequently, those who saw Jesus would most naturally regard Him as a good man.

He *taught* like a good man. One sermon was enough to convince the officers that "never man spake like this man. The sentiment of the Sermon on the Mount that called forth this eulogy was repeated every time He spoke. Most naturally they would ask: "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?"

He *acted* like a good man. He "went about doing good." He spent His life among the poor, and they heard Him gladly. The outcasts found in Him a friend, and they loved Him. To the sick He was a physician, and to the helpless He was a helper.

But why not leave it here and just say that He was a good man? To do so would be a strange inconsistency. He constantly affirmed that He was the Son of God, and if He were not how could He be a good man? And so we can easily see the logic to the argument used by another group.

These said that He was an *impostor*. "Not so," they said, "but he leadeth the multitude astray" (v. 12). They thought of Him as one who *made false claims*. "My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me'' (v. 16). He was consistently affirming that He held a unique relationship to the Father. He called upon men to follow Him as the Messiah. Unless He was what He claimed to be, He led astray those who believed on Him. When people ascribed divine authority to Him, He agreed with them. ''Thou art the Christ,'' said Peter. ''Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.''

As these people saw Jesus *He wrecked the lives of those who yielded to His claims.* It is bad enough to defraud people of their money, but those Jews lost everything when they gave up the comforts of their religion. They could not think of one who would lead multitudes away from their ancestral religion as a good man. These people were right. If Jesus was not the Son of God, He led His followers astray, and He was not a good man.

This leads to the third and only other view, that He was the *Son of God.* ''Many believed on him'' (v. 31). ''Others said, This is the Christ'' (v. 41). Those who reached this conclusion were led to it because of very cogent reasons.

There was first of all His demonstration of *power.* ''When the Christ shall come, will he do more signs than those which this man hath done'' (v. 31). One of the first characteristics that we associate with Divinity is power. ''In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.'' It was difficult for those who witnessed Jesus' miracles to think of Him in any other way than as the Son of God. His teaching and sinlessness might theoretically have all been possible, and His life been interpreted on a purely human basis. When the miraculous element is eliminated from Jesus' life, it is not very difficult to regard Him as a human being, as all others are human, though possessing a higher spiritual development, but, so long as the miraculous element is accepted, we are compelled to unite with the centurion who watched Him die on the cross and say: ''Truly this was the Son of God.''

Then, there was the *claim which He gave to His message.* ''My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me'' (v. 16). To perform wonders inexplicable on human grounds, and then to claim that this power came from God, placed Jesus in the position that was surely entitled to serious consideration. Still more reasonable was His claim when we review His character and note the complete correspondence between what He was and what He claimed to be.

Conclusion.—But why these different interpretations when the facts were the same for all? We recall that, on one occasion after an event had taken place in the life of Jesus, some said "that it thundered; others said, An angel hath spoken to him." The same phenomenon was to some, natural; to others, supernatural. Is not the verdict in the man rather than the character of the phenomenon? Is it not a question of attitude rather than fact? Is there anything in the context to suggest a standard for determining truth?

At least a suggestion is given in Jesus' own words when He says: "If any willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of *God*, or whether I speak from *myself*" (v. 17). Here is the key to understanding the nature of Jesus. Let us use it.

## FASHIONING, TRANSFORMING, PROVING.

(Rom. 12:2.)

Introduction.—Jesus prayed that His disciples should not be taken out of the world, but should be sanctified in it. It is true that the disciples are still in the world, but the sanctifying process since Jesus' day has been considerably modified. It is perfectly safe for a boat to be in the water, so long as the water keeps out of the boat. The line of distinction, however, between the church and the world has been continually disappearing until it is difficult to tell what distinguishes one who is a professed

Christian from one who is not. For such an age Paul's exhortation to the church at Rome is particularly applicable.

1. Be Not Fashioned According to This World.—The word "fashioned" here refers to external resemblance. Jesus, we are told, was "found in fashion as a man." External conformity to the world on the part of a Christian is a sign of sharing the ideals of the world, and Paul enjoined not to do the one that we might not participate in the other.

Their "world" was very much like ours. It was an enlightened world. It was a world whose dominant interest was in material things. It was pagan. There was little sense of the beyond. There were many influences at work to cause them to conform to their environment. Religion had lost its grip, such as it had, upon the people. It was, therefore, difficult for those who had accepted the gospel to live in this environment and maintain their Christian character and ideals, yet Paul asserted that it was possible, and said: "Be not conformed to this world."

Our world is unlike theirs. They had not had an opportunity to test the values of a life based on material things like we have. We have seen the failure of Greece with its advanced culture, and the downfall of Rome with all its power. Our age of jazz has been tested. It is failing;

indeed, it has failed. It has nothing to offer of permanent value, for it presents life only in an exaggerated one-sidedness. Like Ephraim of old, it is like a "cake half-baked," all burnt on one side and dough on the other. What is needed in our modern world is to transfer half of the energy—for heat is energy—to the other side of life.

We have seen the failure of materialistic and paganistic standards of living, and so the injunction, "Don't be like your environment," should appeal even more strongly to us than to the Roman Christians.

2. "BE YE TRANSFORMED."—Just as "conformed" referred to changing the external form so now "transform" means to change the form of living the other way. It is the same word in the original that is translated "transfigured" in Matt. 17:2 and Mark 9:2. Here the reference is to the transfiguration or transforming of Jesus, and while the use of the word here does not mean literally the same character of a transformation, it at least beautifully suggests the way in which our ideals should be directed. Paul would not have us adapt ourselves to the standards of the age, but to those spiritual ideals which we find in Christ.

He suggests the means by which this transformation can be attained. It is to be "by the renewing of your mind." The mind is the starting-point of the transformation. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The mind is made new when new desires and impulses supplant the old, so that "if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new."

But this transformation of the life resulting from the setting up of new ideals is a gradual process. So the mind has to be renewed continually and fresh supplies of grace given to meet the Christian's daily need. How shall this be done? One must recognize his place in the body of Christ, as the writer mentions in verses 4 and 5, and use the gifts with which God has endowed him, as is illustrated in verses 6-8. It is more than hinted that the renewal of the mind, and the consequent transformation, is realized in our co-operation with other believers in Christ, and the giving of our best in service.

3. "THAT YE MAY PROVE."—The first thing to be proved is "the good." People rejoice sometimes in pagan ways of living. To be "eating and drinking," fulfilling the round of social engagements, is sometimes interpreted as the good that life offers. The kingdom of God is different; it is "not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

The next thing to prove is the "acceptable." The satisfaction of proving the good is not only a delight to the individual of the thing itself, but it is acceptable to God. Here is the most perfect harmony between the human and the divine, the present and the future, which is able to give a poise to life that is impossible by any other standard.

Then we are to prove "the perfect will of God." God is perfect. He is all-wise. His will must be good because of what He is. To live in harmony with the perfect will of God is to discover the best there is in life. This is not a dream; it is the record of history, the testimony of experience, and it may be proved.

Conclusion.—The threefold exhortation of the text is, after all, a unified one. The universal judgment of those who respond to it is that it is good. Paul knew it because he had tried. Every one else who takes him seriously agrees. Other goals in life fail. Let us make the test here that we may discover the rich values inherent in the Christian faith.

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